



John Howard Association of Illinois

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An Association Report:

Volunteer Visit
to the
Cook County Juvenile
Temporary Detention Center
25 June 2007

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Visiting Team Members

30 July 2007

This report was written by Patricia Connell, J.D., with contributions from members of a volunteer visiting team. Malcolm C. Young edited the report. The information presented in the report is based upon observations of volunteer citizens who visited the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center on behalf of the Association under Ms. Connell's direction on 25 June 2007.

The John Howard Association of Illinois provides critical public oversight of the state's prisons, jails, and juvenile correctional facilities. As it has for more than a century, the Association promotes fair, humane, and effective sentencing and correctional policies, addresses inmate concerns, and provides Illinois citizens and decision-makers with information needed to improve criminal and juvenile justice.

Volunteer citizen visits to Illinois adult and juvenile correctional facilities are one means of providing public oversight of prisons, jails, and juvenile corrections facilities. These visits bring people from many walks of life into closed institutions where they can observe activities and conditions and speak with residents and employees.

Many volunteers who visit juvenile corrections facilities for the Association have professional backgrounds and experience in aspects of child and adolescent behaviors, but none are correctional professionals. Their observations do not substitute for professional accreditation or evaluations conducted by experts such as are on the Association's staff and among its consultants. They are, however, invaluable in providing a fresh view of how youth from the community are treated in juvenile facilities and, through published reports, in informing policymakers and the general public about the current state of youth corrections as seen through the volunteers' eyes. Consistent, periodic visits by teams of volunteers chronicle changes in an institution over time and permit comparisons between different facilities serving similar populations within the state.

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Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center
Visit of 25 June 2007

Introduction

The John Howard Association of Illinois conducted a regularly scheduled monitoring visit to the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center on Monday, June 25, 2007. Team members included John Howard Association of Illinois Board Member Philip Carrigan, John Howard Association of Illinois' Juvenile Justice Program Director Pat Connell, Kelly Austin, Judy Cottle, Katina Cummings, Millie Juskevics, Tony Kelly, Randy McCraney, Sheila Merry, and Heather Schoenfield. This report summarizes the team's observations.

At the time of the visit, the Detention Center was deeply embroiled in legal and public controversy about safety, conditions, staffing, and particularly, the Detention Center's pace of meeting even partially the terms and conditions agreed to in January 2007 by Cook County government as it defended a federal civil rights law suit, Doe v. Cook County et. al.¹

After the last regularly scheduled monitoring visit for which a report was published, the Board of the John Howard Association of Illinois created a Special Committee which conducted its own inquiries and visits to the Detention Center in January and February 2007. The Special Committee issued its own report, "Report and Recommendations: Special Committee on the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center" on 14 March 2007. The Committee described several key County failures and tardiness in meeting terms and conditions and completing tasks to which the County had obligated itself in January 2007.² The Committee recommended that the County provide stability in staffing and leadership at the Detention Center by retaining key administrators and supervisors.³ The Committee called for transfer of the Detention Center to the oversight of the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County as provided in legislation that passed both houses of the Illinois legislature.⁴

¹ No. 99 C 3945, before Judge John Nordberg, Federal District Court, Northern District of Illinois. For additional background on the long-running Doe litigation, see "An Association Report: Volunteer Visit to the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center (John Howard Association of Illinois 23 August 2006," (John Howard Association of Illinois, October 2006); and "Report and Recommendations: Special Committee on the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center" (John Howard Association of Illinois, 14 March 2007). These and other reports from the Association are available on line at www.john-howard.org.

² Op. cit., at p. 7-15. Hereafter cited as "Report of the Special Committee."

³ Report of the Special Committee; see Recommendation II and accompanying text, pp. 16 – 18, 19-20.

⁴ Report of the Special Committee, Recommendation VII at pp. 32-35. (In March when the Committee published its Report, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich had not signed the legislation transferring the Detention Center to the oversight of the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court. As of 2 August 2007, the Governor has still not signed the bill. If and when the Governor signs the bill it will not become effective until 1 January 2008. – Ed.)

Plaintiff's lawyers in Doe, apparently dissatisfied by the County's progress in meeting the terms and conditions to which it had agreed in January 2007, filed a motion in federal court on 27 May 2007 asking the federal court to appoint a receiver. On 31 May 2007 the County appeared in Court to oppose the motion. As argued in Court by Plaintiffs' lawyers, the receiver's extraordinary powers would include the authority to order payment for services, make purchases, hire and fire staff, and otherwise take control of the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center.⁵

A series of appearances in front of U. S. District Court Judge John Nordberg followed.

In federal court on Thursday 21 June 2007, attorneys for Cook County advised the Court and opposing Counsel that the Cook County Board of Commissioners would soon consider a resolution transferring oversight of the Detention Center to the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court more or less immediately on the County's authority, well in advance of the effective date of the legislation passed by the General Assembly. The County's attorney's offered that this step would mitigate against appointment of a receiver, as would evidence of progress being made in implementing the terms and conditions the County had agreed to in January 2007.⁶ Judge John Nordberg set the case for a hearing with evidence to be taken on 11 July, 2007.⁷

A Decimated Staff: the "Revolving Door" of Leadership

The John Howard Association team began its visit by meeting with Acting Superintendent Robert "Pete" Catchings, Special Assistant to the Superintendent Oldaker, and Case work Supervisor Powell. Later in the morning Jennifer Kohler joined in discussions.

These four people constituted the leading non-medical administrative staff at the Detention Center. Former Assistant Superintendent Carl Sanniti, a nationally-recognized detention center administrator who was carrying the water in attempting to change the discipline and intake procedures, was essentially fired by the County government in March 2007 three days after the Special Committee published its report, reportedly as a way to reduce the Detention Center budget. Sanniti's departure left Catchings the only administrator with significant experience in juvenile corrections. Catchings was "promoted" to Acting Superintendent. Jennifer Kohler, an attorney from County Board President Todd Stroger's staff, was designated "Counsel" to the Detention Center. At the

⁵ See, Malcolm C. Young, "By-standers Report of Court Proceedings: 31 May 2007" (John Howard Association of Illinois 2007). Two informal "by-standers reports" are available on the Association's web page at www.john-howard.org.)

⁶ Such a resolution was presented at the 11 July 2007 County Board meeting, but it was withdrawn before it could be voted upon. It was apparently not submitted at the County Board's meeting of 31 July, 2007, the Board's last scheduled meeting until September. – Ed.

⁷ At the defendant Cook County's request, the 11 July 2007 hearing was to be preceded by depositions of potential witnesses.

The hearings scheduled at the time of the John Howard Association of Illinois's team visit have not been held. On 11 July 2007, the Plaintiffs and Defendants notified the Court that they were engaged in negotiations on the possible agreed appointment of a receiver. Since 11 July 2007 hearings have been continued, with the next court date now set for 7 August 2007. The John Howard Association of Illinois is not involved in negotiations and is not formally advised of their status. – Ed.

meeting with team members Ms. Kohler described her role as helping to bring the Detention Center into compliance with the Modified Implementation Plan agreed to in January 2007. She attempts to prioritize issues, break tasks into manageable pieces and to begin the work on that task. Ms. Kohler does not have prior experience in juvenile corrections.

Oldaker and Powell are two experienced veterans at the Center. Catchings has the assistance of one other senior administrator who is related to a County Commissioner, but her work at the Detention Center has never been observed by or described to the John Howard Association of Illinois.

At the time of this visit, the Detention Center had fewer upper-level supervisors than during previous John Howard Association visits. Just before the Special Committee issued its report in March 2007, the County terminated all four of its Floor Manager positions. That action resulted in the layoff of at least one highly-regarded employee.⁸

Members of the visiting team felt that Acting Superintendent Catchings was virtually “the last man standing” at the time when the Detention Center needed a full complement of leaders who could bring about change in the line staff.

The visiting team experienced some limitation on the usual free flow of information to it. For the first time in memory at any correctional facility, and unlike earlier visits at the Detention Center, the Detention Center’s managers were obviously guarded in their comments. They indicated that they had been instructed by Counsel in the Doe litigation not to answer most of the John Howard Association team members’ questions. Acting Superintendent Catchings offered that he would have tried to have Assistant State’s Attorney Pat Blanchard, the County’s Counsel in Doe, present at the meeting, but that he had gotten mixed messages about whether our visit was going forward, and had not done so.⁹ Blanchard was not available on short notice.

With these unfortunate constraints, the visiting team did not obtain the quantity of information about staffing levels below the management level and other data that is usually given to it.¹⁰ The team was, however, given unrestricted access to the facility to observe and communicate with residents and line staff.

The visiting team’s observations cut beyond the confusion created by any miscommunication about the timing of its visit or lack of information about staffing levels. According to a seasoned team member:

⁸ For a description of Floor Managers and other supervisory positions, see “Volunteer Visit 23 August 2006,” op. cit. at pp. 5-6. About the firing of the Floor Managers, the Special Committee said, “. . . we believe the decision an error.” Id. at p. 19.

⁹ Catchings confusion was not his fault. In an encounter at the 21 June 2007 hearing in federal court, he and John Howard Association of Illinois Executive Director Malcolm Young briefly discussed postponing the scheduled visit due to the turmoil at the Detention Center. However, Young went to his office to find that postponement was impossible due to the number of visitors and the intensity of interest in conditions at the Detention Center. Messages to that effect failed to reach the Acting Superintendent until the morning of the planned visit.

¹⁰ The visiting team was unable to obtain staffing information that would confirm whether or not the Detention Center had met staffing requirements for Juvenile Detention Counselors, Recreation Specialists or Caseworkers agreed to by the County in January 2007, see, Modified Implementation Plan, January 3, 2007, at page 36-37.

Even in our short visit and interactions with management, the tension in the room seemed palpable. Between the pending litigation ... and the pending organization changes which seemed to be pitting old school against new comers, everyone seemed to be walking on eggshells. It is hard to imagine an organization being able to deliver services in an effective manner in this environment.

The same visitor also noted an apparent lack of communication between and among staff. This impression was reinforced by interactions observed throughout the day. When a staff member was asked questions about what rooms on the unit she was working were habitable she replied that she didn't really know as it wasn't the unit to which she was regularly assigned. Visitors also watched a counselor and a case worker debating the most current version of a form. The case worker had not seen a medical request form that had been released six months previously. She had continued to use the older, outdated form.

Two other visitors who had made frequent visits over many years commented that the Center "seemed as bad as they could remember it." They reflected on the physical appearance and an almost siege mentality that many staff members presented.

"There is no question that the revolving door of leadership has taken its toll. Staff are confused about how things are supposed to work, who is in charge, where things are headed... There is a sense of two steps forward to one step back (if not three steps back.)"

Visitors' observations document a lack of progress over time at the Detention Center when compared to the situation in years past. In a report published in January 2006 the Association characterized staff confusion as it had observed it over five years of visits:

"If you ask two supervisors the same question you will often get two different answers. Likewise, decisions seem to change without a clear articulation of reasoning or even an indication of the persons responsible for making the change."

And:

"Frequent changes in the duties assigned to these individuals have occurred, causing further problems."

In January 2006, the John Howard Association of Illinois attributed the situation to a turnover in supervisory and administrative staff that were in any event chosen more for their relationships to officials in County government than for their professional qualifications.¹¹

In June 2007, the visiting team attributes evidence of staff confusion and inconsistencies in instructions to the County's decisions decimating management and

¹¹ Pat Connell, "Volunteer Visits to the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center 2001-2005" (John Howard Association of Illinois, January 2006) at p. 13. (Hereafter cited as "Volunteer Visits 2001-2005").

middle-level leadership. The “revolving door” has turned out more managers and supervisors than it has admitted.

The visiting team’s overall observations were that Acting Superintendent Catchings has more experience than many of his predecessors and the best of intentions. But his situation as the sole senior administrator with juvenile correctional experience has been made nearly impossible by a lack of other qualified management. Without supervisory staff of sufficient professional experience and mid-level management capabilities, the challenge of making an operation the size and complexity of the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center work well and of making up for lost time and past deficits becomes virtually insurmountable.

The Detention Center’s Approach to Intake, Behavior Management and Discipline

During the Association’s visit on 23 August 2006, Assistant Superintendent Carl Sanitti energetically described changes in the works for the intake process and for behavior management and discipline. After he left the room, other staff told us that the practice was still short of the plan, but that there was a consensus behind Sanitti’s proposed changes which led us to optimism about the prospects for success.¹²

During this visit, when asked about the behavior modification program, the team was told that no work was being done on that at present. The Center still functions with a four level system with youth gaining privileges as they progress from one level to another. Historic criticism of the system is that it takes too long for youth to progress to higher levels, and that there is a lack of meaningful rewards. These criticisms have not been addressed. In addition to Mr. Sanitti, the individuals who had been assigned to work on this problem have left the Center or been assigned other tasks and no work is being done to improve the current system.

The visiting team encountered an example of what they believed to be counter-productive “behavior management.” While on one of the boy’s living units, visitors spoke with one staff member who indicated that the boys made their beds and straightened their rooms each morning. He then went on to say that while the boys are at school, he “ransacks” the rooms to try to find any contraband. The boys must then make the beds and straighten up again when they return from school. The team wondered if this approach represented any kind of uniform policy throughout the Detention Center, or whether a routine disruptive search of a youth’s room is necessarily dictated by correctional security policy.

Lack of progress in behavior management seems to put the Detention Center out of compliance with the terms and conditions agreed to in January 2007, which appear to have given the Detention Center 90 days to implement a new approach to behavior modification.¹³

¹² “Volunteer Visit 23 August 2006”, op. cit., at pp. 4-5.

¹³ Modified Implementation Plan, January 3, 2007, at page 32.

The Detention Center was to have prepared an updated orientation video for use at intake.¹⁴ Ms. Koehler reports that the Detention Center had now begun to prepare the new video, although it first needed to find the old version.

Procedures in Intake have been modified away from the direction described by Sanitti in August 2006. In the spring the Detention Center had finally instituted a procedure for searching, showering and issuing institutional clothes in the basement Intake Area. The purpose behind this regimen was to reduce or eliminate the amount of contraband entering the facility. By June 2007, these procedures were abandoned. Youth were again entering the Center living units in street clothing. Youth were also observed wearing personal footwear, another possible means of introducing contraband.

Team members observed one youth during the intake process. He had actually been released by the court, but since no parent was present he was taken to Intake. After initial identifying information was taken, he was told to call home or a parent. When no one answered, staff proceeded with the intake process. Apparently the youth will be processed as if he had been ordered into detention and be placed on an Intake Unit until his parent or guardian shows up to take him home.

While the team was present the boy took the MAYSI test as a self administered, computer test to identify the presence of any suicidal threat. (Our visitors were able to see the answers the boy was selecting and wondered if a higher degree of privacy was needed in order to generate accurate/truthful answers.) The computer both generates the written test and orally speaks the questions. The young man appeared to have no trouble understanding and completing the test. When he was finished, a nurse came from the medical unit to complete his initial health screen.

Safety for Children at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center

Acting Superintendent Catchings reported that since he has been at the Center (September 2006) he feels confident that progress has been made on eliminating abuse of residents. He vehemently denied that staff allowed youth to fight among themselves, a complaint that is heard with some frequency at the John Howard Association of Illinois.

Catchings told the team that a meeting was held on May 18, 2007 to fine tune the Department of Children and Family Service's ("DCFS") role in investigating allegations of abuse. DCFS will be training all Center staff on their abuse reporting responsibilities at a date to be determined.

Due to constraints the visiting team did not review medical records or otherwise attempt to determine the frequency of documented allegations of abuse or unexplained injury, as it has in the past. The team heard from John Howard Association staff of their impression that complaints of abuse to the Association have decreased in recent months.

It is however still the case that the Detention Center has no system in place which provides transparency on the critical matter of the safety of children in its care. Even if a youth's allegations of abuse are communicated to the DCFS, and even if the DCFS

¹⁴ A revised video was promised by Mr. Sanitti in August 2006; see "Volunteer Visit 23 August 2006", *op. cit.*, at p. 3.

conducts an appropriate investigation, there is no method of tracking these investigations so that is possible to determine the timeliness of investigations and their conclusion, or to obtain solid data on the frequency of claims of abuse or of actual abuse.¹⁵ Moreover, DCFS does not report its findings publicly, further confounding public accountability. Safety initiatives such as a hot line have not been implemented.

And of equal concern, and contrary to the terms and conditions agreed to in January 2007, the Detention Center has still not hired a full time professional investigator¹⁶ to pursue complaints or evidence of staff malfeasance.

¹⁵ See, John Howard Association of Illinois recommendations for Safety of Children at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, "Visit of 23 August 2007" at p.15.

¹⁶ The Detention Center was to hire an investigator within 90 days of implementation of the January 2007 agreement, or to submit an alternative proposal. See, Modified Implementation Plan, January 3, 2007, at page 7. In previous meetings Detention Center staff indicated their choice was to hire an investigator.

Grievances

The team did not survey grievances filed in previous months as it has occasionally done. Girls complained that “nothing happened” with grievances filed regarding lack of phone calls.

Physical Conditions and Environment on the Living Units

Our visitors observed on Units 3D (intake for older girls) and 3 G (younger boys.) On the 3D we saw mold on the shower curtains, standing water in one tub and one sink and dripping water in the sinks. A dryer seemed to be vented to the air and there was a very visible quantity of lint hanging from light fixtures in the room with the dryer. All but one individual room on the unit appeared habitable. Room 1 had cracked glass in the window which had not been repaired.

The individual living rooms are as always stark. They appeared passably clean with one exception. One girl complained of bugs coming out of her sink. She showed a visitor what appeared to be clouds of small gnats coming out of the sink drain.

The day room was devoid of any decoration or color. Bulletin boards are used only to post institution rules and notices. In this unit there were a number of green plants. Otherwise, there seems to have been no progress in decorating or adding color to the notoriously bland, hard, cold walls and posts in the living units.

On the top of a cabinet visitors saw a modest assortment of recreation materials: three games, one jigsaw puzzle, and some playing cards. The girls told us that there were outdoor recreation equipment in the courtyard, but we did not see them.

One girl was being confined in her room and while visitors were present the required 15 minute periodic room checks seemed to be occurring. One girl was in her room getting cleaned up. Staff indicated that girls were encouraged to keep clean and no reasonable requests to bathe were denied.

Other girls were assembled in the common TV area, as they had finished lunch, but were awaiting return to school. The girls seemed comfortable talking with the visitors.

The girls complained that they were supposed to have gotten their weekly phone call on Friday and as of noon on Monday they still hadn't gotten any calls. They complained of boredom on the unit. They praised the music and drama programs which are open to them. But they told visitors that there is little to do other than to watch TV, particularly on the weekends. Visitors observed many of the girls watching a “reality” TV show. A few were reading books and magazines. Team members were told that these reading materials were provided by the girls' families. Girls complained that the facility doesn't provide adequate reading materials.

Girls complained to visitors about the quality of the toiletries and the food.

Three girls complained they had only one pair of underwear and had to wash and dry them immediately to wear.

Unit 3G, the boy's unit, was dirtier than the girls unit. There was tile missing in the shower and although there was no standing water in showers, the sinks were filthy. Many of the boys' rooms had quantities of toilet paper stuck to walls and ceiling. There was writing on the walls as well. At least one boy had underwear hanging from the outside of his locker, apparently placed there to dry.

A visitor asked to enter one boy's room to admire his 8th grade diploma and a graduation card that was displayed. Upon entering the room, the visitor was struck by the heat and the smell of urine.

The common areas in the boys unit had more decoration on the walls, including jigsaw puzzles that had been assembled and were mounted.

In the TV area there was a book shelf containing approximately 25 books. Boys did not say that these had been provided by their families. A visitor scanned the shelves. At least one third of the books were Bibles.

Education

The team did not undertake a comprehensive review of the school, which is an independent unit operated by the Chicago Board of Education.

The team did determine that all youth who have been formally detained in the Center attend full day school from Monday through Fridays, 12 months per year. The school, Nancy B. Jefferson, is operated by the Chicago Board of Education. A small number of youth are assigned to "Home Bound" schooling or an "In-School Suspension" classroom. These assignments can be made by the Center or the school. It is not clear how often these assignments are being reviewed or by whom. The "Home Bound" program is operated on the living units of the Center. It is designed to serve youth who cannot be present in the Nancy B. Jefferson School because they have violated institutional rules or pose a danger to themselves or others. The "In School" program is located in the school portion of the Center.

Our visitors went to the living unit on which the "Home Bound" program is operated. Three boys were working on math problems with their teacher. They complained that they wanted to be back in Nancy B. Jefferson School where they would have access to other youth and an opportunity to take gym. Their teacher explained that they could earn the right to return, but hadn't yet done so. There is another teacher assigned to the Home Bound program who spends the afternoon working on reading and language skills. During the morning that teacher visits youth who cannot leave their living unit even to attend the Home Bound program. We spoke with one such youth on a living unit later in the visit. He told us that he gets a visit at least once each day, and sometimes both morning and evening. The teacher brings books, work sheets and other materials and works with him.

We did not have an opportunity to meet with the principal on this visit. The team recommends that the John Howard Association of Illinois review the school in more detail during its next regular visit.

Medical and Mental Health

Due to the confusion about the timing of this visit, the Health Care Administrator, Rose Calvin, was not present. The inquiries into medical services were, as a result, very truncated and this report touches only lightly on a few observations.

There are somewhere between 80 and 120 hours of adolescent/pediatric MD coverage at the Detention Center. (Most doctors are on staff at Stroger.) Dr. Margo Bell, the Medical Director, has been at the Detention Center about one month, and holds a senior attending physician position with the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at Stroger Hospital. She told visitors that there are usually two doctors working together at all times. This information was contradicted by a confidential source, who told one visitor that there are no doctors at the Detention Center on Saturday afternoons or Sundays. There is a full time (40 hours per week) dentist whose services have been observed in the past, and which are considered excellent under trying conditions.

Currently there are three girls at the Center who are pregnant. They receive regular care and pre-natal vitamins.

Youth access medical care by filing a request form which is deposited in sick call box on each unit. Staff may also request medical care for youth. Our visitors spoke with no one from the mental health staff. They were told that the physicians make referrals to the mental health staff.

Acting Superintendent Catchings told us they currently have one unit (3J) where they are housing youth who are too aggressive to do well in the general population. It does not appear that this unit is being run as a mental health unit, or with additional help from those services.

The visiting team made few inquiries into mental health services, which is a critical area that has been deficient at the Detention Center. Improvements have been reported since the County entered into a contract with the Isaac Ray Center and the team obtained no information contradicting that hopeful development.

Staff Communications: Roll Call

Ms Kohler explained her recent success in instituting "roll call," which is a nearly-uniform law enforcement and corrections communication device. "Roll calls" are communications with all line staff before each shift. This change was accomplished only after hard work and the County's acceptance of additional cost. Line staff are now paid overtime for the 15 minute period they must appear for roll call before each shift. Instituting roll call was possible only after the Detention Center reduced the number of separate work shifts from eight to the standard three per 24 hour day. So far, the new roll call has been accepted. However, Administrators have not used it to communicate requirements and new responsibilities to line staff. Administrators anticipate hearing complaints about roll call next week when they intend to undertake uniform checks, another first step in the MIP.

Recreation and Programs

Visitors were unable to speak with Mrs. Hollister who supervises the recreation program at the Center. The visiting team was told by Administrators that all youth have “the opportunity” for large muscle exercise twice each day, either outside or in one of the gyms. The outdoor recreation area, which is in the core of the building on the roof of the second level of the facility, is flat concrete, divided by lines into three segments. There are no trees or grass. There are a few flowering plants in several long, low (18” x 2’) planters which provide a touch of green to the barren setting.

Recreation may be voluntary or it might have occurred inside. The weather was fair. During the time they were at the Detention Center, roughly 9 a.m. to 1 p.m, visitors observed no youth using the outside exercise area.

Administrators also told visitors that Miss Wright is in charge of “special programs.” These include a girl scout troop, Looking Glass Theatre, etc. The visitors did not determine how often such activities are held and how many youth can participate, but those who do with whom the visitors spoke give the programs high marks. Visitors were told that youth who stay at the Center for longer periods are more likely to be able to participate.

There are weekly religious services. Catholic mass is held on Saturday. Protestant services are conducted on Sunday. Visitors were told that all youth who want to participate in religious services are allowed to do so.

Population at the Detention Center

The population on the day of the visit was 421, which is slightly up from previous levels. There were 380 males, and 41 females. The racial breakdown at the center is reported to be approximately 80% African-American, 15% Latino, and 5% Caucasian, where it has been for years.

Approximately 70 youth in the Center are facing adult criminal charges, a number that is lower than during recent visits.

There may be some pressure to detain youth due to a possible reduction or limit on alternatives to detention. Staff at the Detention Center told visitors that they believe all alternatives to detention slots are filled. They did acknowledge that perhaps the overall number of slots has been reduced. If so, this is a concern and a step in the wrong direction.

There may be ways to reduce the detention population. Visitors met a member of the probation staff whose job is to facilitate the prompt release of “release upon request” (RUR) youth. She indicated that at any point in time there were roughly 20 to 25 youth present in the Center who are free to leave when their parents appear to pick them up or when certain conditions, such as the availability of placement or electronic monitoring devices, are satisfied.

Family Visiting Policy

The Center ended the policy of requiring appointments for family visits by residents in October 2006. This is seen as a real positive step as youth are able to see their parents as often as three times per week (four if on level four.) However, the Resident Orientation Handbook still contains some ambiguities in how the policy is to work. In addition, in conversations with girls it became clear that they didn't understand how the list of "family members" who are eligible for visits is constructed.

Conclusion: the Visiting Team's Overall Impressions

The John Howard Association visiting team was in the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center at a confusing and chaotic time. Staff were anticipating a possible shift to the oversight of the Chief Judge, or at least participation by the Chief Judge's staff in the operation of the Detention Center. The possibility of a contested hearing at which the opinion of experts, Court Monitors, the Compliance Administrator and staff would be publicly aired was at the least distracting and more likely, unsettling. In this environment, the confusion which led to unusual restrictions on the information given to John Howard Association of Illinois visitors was, if unprecedented, understandable. The visiting team did not obtain as much qualitative information as it usually does. At the same time, it was given full and open access to all units and spaces. Members of the team were able to observe staff, youth and supervisors in their daily routines.

The overall impression was the first: if the Detention Center is not "as bad as visitors could remember it," in several critical areas it is in many easily observed areas of performance not much improved over past years. Nearly all of the positive, prospective changes that the administrative and supervising staff convincingly described to the John Howard Association of Illinois visitors in August 2006 have not been accomplished.

This was a disappointment, but not a surprise to the team. Most of those too few administrative and supervising staff whose leadership held out hope for improvement are gone. As before it is true that the line staff includes good and capable workers. Some of the problematic line staff may now be gone as the result of disciplinary proceedings, although some who were disciplined are believe to be back in the County's employment. As the John Howard Association of Illinois observed in August 2006, "staff have frustrated reforms at the Detention Center in the past, and could do so again."¹⁷

But it is not at all clear that it is line staff who has frustrated progress. Change requires leadership. After years of hiring and hanging on to unqualified Superintendents and managers, Cook County has now let most of its capable leadership, and many of its more able supervisors, go in the name of budget cuts. The visiting team's overall impression is that it has observed the result of the County's actions. Physically the Detention Center remains bleak. The positive benefits, such as recreation, leisure time activities, positive reinforcement through a well-thought out behavior modification program, a responsive grievance and discipline system, and a little bright paint on the walls --- these are missing. So too is the qualified, professional level of oversight,

¹⁷ "Visit of 23 August 2006," at p. 5, ft. nt. 7.

transparency, and other procedural requisites that assure the basic right of children held in the custody of government: safety and security.

This visiting team, like most others before it, deeply yearns to be able to report on positive change and improvement at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. That will have to come in a future report.

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