



John Howard Association of Illinois

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A JHA Special Report: Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice’s Southern Facilities



Harrisburg Vital Statistics

Population: 239
Average Age: 17
Average Annual cost per youth: \$80,126
Security Classification: Medium, male
Population by Race: 62 White (24%), 184 Black (70%), 15 Hispanic (6%)
Committing offense: 4 Murder, 23 Class X felonies, 71 Class 1 felonies, 65 Class 2 felonies, 43 Class 3 felonies, 19 Class 4 felonies, 9 Misdemeanors.

Source: IDJJ (1/25/2012)

Murphysboro Vital Statistics

Population: 45
Average Age: 16
Average Annual cost per youth: \$146,464
Security Classification: Medium, male
Population by Race: 23 White (43%), 20 Black (37%), 2 Hispanic (4%)
Committing offense: 18 Class 1 felonies, 17 Class 2 felonies, 10 Class 3 felonies, 14 Class 4 felonies, 22 Misdemeanors.

Source: IDJJ (1/27/2012)

Pere Marquette Vital Statistics

Population: 17
Average Age: 19
Average Annual cost per youth: \$90,000
Security Classification: Minimum, male
Population by Race: 6 White (35%), 11 Black (65%)
Committing offense: 7 Class 1 felonies, 5 Class 2 felonies, 3 Class 3 felonies, 2 Class 4 felonies

Source: IDJJ (1/30/2012)

In February 2012, the John Howard Association (JHA) visited the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice’s (DJJ) three Southern facilities: IYC-Harrisburg, IYC-Murphysboro, and IYC-Pere Marquette. This report will provide information on any changes or developments at these facilities since JHA’s “2011 Year-End Assessment of DJJ” as well as a brief introduction to JHA’s Juvenile Justice Project’s 2012 initiatives.

Models for **Change**
Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

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Key Observations and Priorities by Facility

IYC-Harrisburg

- (1) JHA witnessed one youth smoking and obtained information from another youth that they are receiving cigarettes from staff. Youth told JHA they were offered cigarettes as behavioral incentives and as rewards for targeting other youth. We believe that this is a serious issue that warrants further investigation and monitoring from DJJ's administration.
- (2) The facility's school continues to write youth disciplinary tickets when sending them to the Ready to Learn (RTL) room, a system designed to reduce the use of punishment and build skills for positive behavior. JHA renews its recommendation that this practice be eliminated so as to allow for the full implementation of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) curriculum.
- (3) The facility's new superintendant, Bill Peyton, plans to increase trauma-focused and sensitive security and programming. JHA supports this change as a critical step towards effective reintegration into the community.
- (4) A facility wide renovation program is underway including the replacement of all bedroom furniture and general rehab of living units to improve youth safety and morale. JHA commends DJJ for this effort.

IYC-Murphysboro

- (1) Governor Quinn's fiscal year 2013 budget calls for the closing of IYC-Murphysboro. While JHA supports the closing of the facility, we hope that the facility can continue to provide youth with effective programming and services during this transition. For JHA's official statement regarding the closing of juvenile facilities, visit <http://thejha.org/DJJclosures>.
- (2) The facility's school is understaffed, lacking specialists including access to a Speech Pathologist and a School Psychologist.
- (3) A number of innovative programs are being implemented, including an initiative that supplies youth with a valid State ID. JHA commends this as a positive step towards providing youth with resources for success upon release.
- (4) Confinement reduction efforts at Murphysboro have been promising. JHA hopes that the reduced use of confinement continues.

IYC-Pere Marquette

- (1) As a new step-down facility for young men, Pere Marquette has significant potential for increasing youth's success after they are release. With sufficient resources, the facility has the ability to become a model program for DJJ.
- (2) Four programs in particular appear promising: the Bachelor Pad Life Skills Program, Life Coach mentoring, off-site field trips, and comprehensive re-entry planning.
- (3) The facility's school is understaffed, raising concerns regarding its ability to effectively educate its population at full or partial capacity. At the time of its visit, JHA observed many youth who had not been enrolled in school a full week after arrival.
- (4) During the time of JHA's visit, Pere Marquette was preparing to reach full capacity. This will prove a serious test of the programming given staff shortages.

Introduction

Shortly after JHA visited the juvenile facilities in Southern Illinois, Governor Quinn as part of the fiscal year 2013 budget, announced his plan to close two juvenile detention facilities, IYC-Joliet and IYC-Murphysboro. JHA believes this is the right decision for the state. Fiscally, Illinois needs to cut costs, and DJJ spends a significant part of its current \$140 million annual budget maintaining facilities it does not need. Both facilities slated for closure hold far fewer youth than they were designed to house, at high costs. Murphysboro, for instance, holds about 30 youth, though it was designed to incarcerate almost 160. Joliet houses around 220 youth, although it was designed to hold 344. Closing these facilities will save taxpayers almost \$20 million a year. While DJJ should never hold youth in crowded conditions, the agency's overall population has been steadily dropping for the past six years and is well below its design capacity at all facilities. As long as DJJ sustains these current numbers, its remaining six facilities can safely absorb the populations from Murphysboro and Joliet.

The Governor's proposal is about more than just balancing the state's budget. By closing Joliet and Murphysboro, the Governor will help DJJ continue to establish a more rehabilitative, cost-effective juvenile justice system that leads to positive outcomes for troubled youth. This includes permitting DJJ to use its limited resources to increase programming, both inside and outside the facilities, that is geared toward returning youth safely and successfully to their communities. At the same time, JHA recognizes that facility closures will create transitions that will be challenging in many ways for DJJ. There are changes that are already underway in DJJ which we hope will be expanded and supported in order to better serve youth under the DJJ mission, which is to keep youth out of facilities and give them the tools they need to succeed in their communities.

Many of the changes that DJJ's Southern facilities are implementing provide an opportunity to expand the restorative justice model inherent in the DJJ mission, specifically by improving after-care and re-entry programming, reducing confinement, and increasing educational and vocational programming. This report will discuss the current state of the facilities from various perspectives, including the following: availability and efficacy of treatment programs, educational programming, recreational and vocational programming, preparation for release and re-entry, the state of staff/youth relations, and improvements and concerns related to physical plant conditions.

IYC-Harrisburg

JHA's February 2012 visit to Harrisburg came at an important crossroads for the facility, which included the arrival of a new superintendent and recent physical plant renovations. With these changes, Harrisburg demonstrates potential for positive improvement. Its challenges, however, remain as the state struggles financially and the new Superintendent, Bill Peyton, attempts to navigate a new institution.

In 2011, JHA identified seven recommendations for Harrisburg:

- (1) End the practice of ticket writing when sending students to the Ready to Learn (RTL) room,
- (2) Implement behavior modification in lieu of ticket writing,
- (3) Provide youth with representation when challenging a ticket,
- (4) Increase tracking of confinement use,
- (5) Increase staff diversity,
- (6) Implement weekly outdoor activities for youth, and
- (7) Assign one counselor to each housing unit.

In reviewing these areas, JHA recognizes that administrative transitions can create some complication. At the time of the visit, Superintendent Peyton had only been at the facility for two weeks. He came from the adult Illinois Department of Correction's Big Muddy Correctional Center, where he was the warden. Superintendent Peyton also has a history in community mental health with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. While it is early in his tenure, his primary focus is improving security as a means to enhance programming potential, with a specific focus on youth's history with trauma. This background will be an asset to the youth at Harrisburg, given studies that indicate that as many as 93 percent of youth involved in the criminal justice system have experienced at least one traumatic episode and 59 percent of males had experienced being threatened with a weapon.¹ While research into youth trauma is not consistent across the literature, it largely agrees that rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are disproportionately high and that many youth have experienced some form of trauma prior to their involvement in the criminal justice system.²

The current mental health professional caseload at Harrisburg is 1:22. As of April of 2012, the facility has a combined 171 hours of mental health professional work time divided between five different professionals, and there are currently two vacancies for mental health staff. There are 10 hours per week of psychiatric coverage, and 45 youth are being administered psychotropic medication, which is a lower number of youth taking medication than other DJJ facilities with a comparable population. Scheduling conflicts between mental health professionals work hours and school hours have led to some students being removed from the classroom for counseling sessions. Creating solutions to maximize both time in school and mental health visits, like adjusting work schedules if necessary, should be addressed.

¹ Karen M. Abram, Linda A. Teplin, Devon R. Charles, Sandra L. Longworth, Gary M. McClelland, & Minda K. Dulcan, *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Trauma in Youth in Juvenile Detention*, 61 Arch Gen Psychiatry 403 (2004).

² Julian D. Ford, John F. Chapman, Josephine Hawke, & David Albert, *Trauma Among Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: Critical Issues and New Directions*, Natl. Cntr. for Mntl. Hlth. & Juv. Just. 2007

Following JHA's criticism, DJJ has implemented a bedroom furniture replacement program throughout its facilities, which includes new safety beds and improved plumbing units, shelving, seating, and electrical fixtures.³

At the time of JHA's visit in February, Harrisburg's renovations were nearly complete. Capitalizing on the opportunity for renovation, DJJ administration also repainted cell walls. Furthermore, the facility is consolidating counselor caseloads and putting their offices inside of the unit that houses their youth. This will improve coordination, follow-up, and availability.

In addition to replacing furniture and improving counselor interaction, Harrisburg's administration eliminated its separate housing unit for maximum-security youth. Instead, these youth have been re-evaluated individually for predatory behavior and carefully placed into the general population. This allows for youth to participate in more programming, increases socialization, and decreases the operational restrictions related to keeping maximum-security youth separate from the general population.

Education

Harrisburg's school is of particular interest to JHA, as it is currently the only DJJ facility to provide post-secondary education, which is made possible through a partnership with Southern Illinois College. Like other facilities, Harrisburg is preparing to offer a digital high school program through the Florida Virtual School.⁴ The primary advantage of this program is that it will allow students to complete graduation requirements. The facility has also implemented a "Check-in Check-out" program, which is for youth nearing their Administrative Review Date when the Prisoner Review Board will determine whether they will be discharged. In this program, eligible youth are paired with a Harrisburg staff member with whom they check-in at the start of each school day, set goals, and check-out at the end of the day to evaluate behavior. This program appears to be a positive development for improving youth behavior, although JHA continues to have concerns regarding Harrisburg's other behavior initiative, discussed below.

In the 2011 Harrisburg monitoring report, JHA raised concerns regarding the schools implementation of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) behavior modification program. A keystone to the model is the Ready to Learn (RTL) room, where students causing disruptions in class can be sent for a 'cool down' period where they work with an RTL specialist/teacher. Theoretically, this model is rehabilitative and provides an alternative to ticket writing. Tickets are a disciplinary tactic. They are issued in response to disruptive or undesirable youth behavior. Tickets reduce the number of desirable things a youth can have or do within the facility. PBIS works with students to develop tools to maintain positive behavior. However, as of this past visit, teachers continue to write tickets when youth are sent to the RTL room. The school principal asserts that these tickets are necessary for the more significant disruptions. JHA continues to believe that ticket writing should be eliminated for students sent to the RTL room as it undermines the goal of helping these students regain focus in a non-punitive environment.

³ See JHA reports dated 9/14/09 and also 5/17/11 at <http://thejha.org/publications> for further description of renovations and improvements

⁴ More information at <http://www.flvs.net/>

Improved data systems

IYC-Harrisburg has implemented an electronic disciplinary record system. JHA commends DJJ and Harrisburg for implementing this new system, as it saves an enormous amount of time in casework, Prison Review Board file preparation, disciplinary decisions, and security designations. This system allows the staff to enter or retrieve data without having to dig through the physical file for each individual ticket or write up. Furthermore, it has clear application for better tracking of confinement use. The digitized system, however, cannot be linked with other facilities due to the fact DJJ lacks a uniform electronic record keeping system. JHA advocates for the modernization and coordination of DJJ computer systems to increase data tracking and sharing as a critical step towards improving security, programming, discipline, and re-entry planning.

Concerns

Based on conversations with youth and JHA monitors' direct observations, we are concerned with the general hygiene of youth clothing in the facility. At the time of JHA's visit, youth were provided laundry only once per week. Many other DJJ facilities are on a daily or every other day laundry rotation. Youth receive just three pairs of socks, three shirts, three pants, and four pairs of underwear. JHA recommends that the laundry rotation be increased to at least twice weekly to allow youth to wear clean clothing every day.

The relationship between staff and youth is an ongoing concern at Harrisburg. In addition to hearing multiple reports of security staff's use of racist language directed towards black youth, JHA notes a significant security breach which occurred during the March 2011 monitoring visit of Harrisburg. During that visit, JHA monitors found one youth smoking a cigarette in his cell, and evidence of cigarette smoking in a second youth cell. This is a direct violation of DJJ policy. JHA did not discuss this activity in its 2011 report, waiting for further information and evidence before determining a course of action.

In February of 2012, a youth housed at Murphysboro volunteered information to JHA staff that he would prefer to be housed at Harrisburg because the staff gives the youth cigarettes at that facility. This youth indicated that the staff provide youth with cigarettes as an incentive and reward for positive behavior, or as a bribe to target another youth using violence or another form of manipulation. This situation has multiple implications for youth's health and safety, as well as significant negative ramifications for youth as they work towards rehabilitation and integration into the community upon release.

The information from the youth at Murphysboro came days after the JHA February 2012 visit to Harrisburg, and it appears that there was no immediate communication of this information to Superintendent Peyton. In a phone call, on April 23, 2012, to discuss youth smoking at Harrisburg, Superintendent Peyton informed JHA staff that regular, unannounced shake-downs of all personnel entering the facility are performed, and that any person found with contraband on their person (including tobacco products) is subject to disciplinary action. This discussion

included ways youth may procure tobacco products in the facility, including taking cigarettes out of staff jacket pockets, or finding used tobacco products left by staff.

While Superintendent Peyton said that bringing cigarettes or any tobacco product into a facility is prohibited, DJJ administration acknowledged that some staff might ignore this rule, and that youth could obtain contraband by stealing from the staff. This would likely go unreported due to staff fear of repercussions for bringing contraband into the facility, though Superintendent Peyton believes that regular, unannounced shake-downs greatly diminish the possibility of these items entering the facility.

Providing youth with contraband, purposefully or not, places youth at risk for disciplinary action. If some staff use cigarettes as a bribe to target other youth, it would reinforce for youth that there are positive rewards for predatory behavior and cause distrust of staff. This would undermine DJJ's core mission, which is to provide a rehabilitative and safe environment for young people to become productive citizens. JHA will closely monitor this security issue by asking to see documentation of staff shake-downs, collecting data on contraband found during shake-downs, and also by watching for and collecting information from youth about their experience with access to and use of tobacco products inside the facility.

Summary

Harrisburg and the DJJ administration have addressed some of the concerns outlined in JHA's 2011 report, including assigning counselors to housing units and addressing behavior through the "Check-in Check-out" program. Additionally, confinement numbers continue to drop, and DJJ is currently conducting a department-wide confinement reduction working group that JHA hopes will continue to increase the monitoring of confinement through use of data collection. The implementation of the electronic disciplinary system is also a step in the right direction. JHA still has concerns about youth's mental health being adequately addressed, given the staff shortages and scheduling in this area. Also of concern is that youth are still, to JHA's knowledge, not provided with representation when challenging tickets, and it appears that alternatives to ticket writing have not been implemented. The mild winter weather appears to have increased organized outdoor activity for youth, as JHA recommended in its last report. JHA's recommendation to increase staff's diversity remains a significant challenge across Illinois juvenile and adult correctional systems. JHA continues to have concerns about the relationship between staff and youth at this facility, particularly surrounding information about the use of contraband by youth and supplied by staff.

In JHA's subsequent report, staff will monitor the following areas:

- (1) Trauma-focused and trauma-sensitive security and programming.
- (2) School disruptions by altering the mental health schedule.
- (3) Ticket writing when sending youth to the Ready to Learn room in school.

- (4) Hygiene of youth's clothing by adding at least one laundry rotation per week.
- (5) Reports of staff members providing youth with cigarettes as behavioral incentives. Review data on staff shakedowns, including frequency, contraband found, and any disciplinary action taken against staff caught entering the facility with contraband.

IYC-Murphysboro

IYC-Murphysboro is a small medium security facility with an even smaller population of male youth. While the facility is designed to hold 156 youth, there were only 35 youth being held in the facility as of April 26, 2012. This low population number is due to multiple factors, including fewer youth being incarcerated system wide, plans to close Murphysboro, and transitioning some youth to Pere Marquette from Murphysboro so they can participate in the step-down program.

In 2011, JHA noted five recommendations at the facility, as well as numerous areas to monitor:

- (1) Update library and prepare it for use,
- (2) Implement PBIS and eliminate or reduce the use of disciplinary tickets in school,
- (3) Increase school hours from 20 to 25,
- (4) Fill critical staff vacancies, and
- (5) Implement an arts program.

In reviewing these recommendations during its February visit, JHA noted that staff shortages pose significant problems for Murphysboro and frustrates its effort to improve upon its ability to provide youth with services. In particular, JHA found during its visit that the school was understaffed with all teachers working outside of their specialization. JHA further noted that when a teacher is absent, students are sent to their next teacher's room where they must wait. On the day of JHA's visit, two teachers were absent requiring some students to sit and wait in the classroom for such a long time that the teacher ran out of educational activities for them.

Update: Since our visit, current Superintendent Lisa Nordstrom informed JHA on May 1, 2012 that that the facility currently has eight teachers, two of whom are on leave, and that this number does not leave them understaffed.

In addition to teachers, Murphysboro lacks a dedicated school psychologist or speech pathologist. These are professionals that Murphysboro is supposed to share with Harrisburg, and claim to be working on a schedule to do so, however, the principal reported that neither had visited in many months. With Governor Quinn's plan to close Murphysboro, staff has, in general, demonstrated a dedication to their jobs. For instance, they recently organized an off-site baptism for a youth, and one teacher has worked strenuously to solicit donated textbooks and other materials.

A positive initiative proposed at Murphysboro is to provide youth with a valid State ID for identification purposes outside the facility. Working closely with the Secretary of State's office, the facility hopes to gain access to the Mobile State ID unit in the near future. JHA sees this as a helpful step that will ensure a more successful reintegration of youth into the community upon release.

Murphysboro has also implemented an innovative strategy to reduce confinement. At the time of JHA's visit, the confinement unit was empty and one cell had been converted into a "Time Out" room. If discipline is necessary, youth are referred to their counselor. If the issue cannot be resolved, youth are then taken to the Time Out room for a short period of time to cool down. Confinement is used in instances where the time out is unsuccessful in reintegrating the youth back into the population. JHA urges Murphysboro to collect data on the use of the time out room, so its effectiveness can be monitored.

Summary

Many of JHA's concerns for Murphysboro remain ongoing and may persist given Governor Quinn's closure announcement. The facility's working greenhouse and workshop remain untapped resources due to staff shortages. Shortages of security personnel have also necessitated the elimination of the Sleepover program that allowed youth a weekend outside of the dormitories.

In the 2012 reporting cycle, JHA will continue to visit Murphysboro as its future remains in flux and monitor the following areas:

- (1) Allocation of resources in light of Governor Quinn's proposed closing of Murphysboro to ensure that youth continue to have access to necessary services. This includes providing access to specialists such as the Speech Pathologist and School Psychologist.
- (2) Youth access to the Teen Center in light of shortened stays at the facility.
- (3) Provision of State IDs including tracking of number of youth participating.
- (4) The continuation of confinement reduction efforts.

IYC-Pere Marquette

As noted in JHA's 2011 End of Year report, Pere Marquette had recently transitioned from a female youth facility to a male, medium-security step-down facility. JHA did not publish a full report on the facility in 2011 due to the transition. This second update functions as continued monitoring of the facility.

Pere Marquette is a unique facility in DJJ. It lacks barbed-wire fences, has significant outdoor space, a Teen Center, and a number of highly innovative programs designed to prepare youth for a successful transition back into the community. To participate in the Pere Marquette program,

youth must have only 90 days left before the PRB is scheduled to determine whether they will be discharged and must have a post release placement. Good behavior and age (older youth are preferred) are factors also taken into consideration. DJJ is currently selecting youth who demonstrate behaviorally that they have the best chance for success upon release and the lowest potential for causing disturbances in the program. Murphysboro, the main facility sending youth to Pere Marquette, prepares youth for the transition by providing them with a pamphlet and calling parents/guardians to inform them that the transition will require their involvement. Youth reported to JHA, however, that they received no transition counseling.

Elements of the Step-Down Program

During the February visit, JHA's staff and volunteers were impressed with the Pere Marquette step-down program and believe with more work it could become a model that DJJ could implement through its system. As of March 22, 2012, 38 youth have graduated from the program since it began in April of 2011, and only three have returned to DJJ custody.⁵

The step-down model has four major programs: Life Coach Mentoring, Bachelor Pad independent living program, off-site field trips that aid in community reintegration, and re-entry planning and follow up. All of this is made possible by a highly motivated staff.

Life Coach Mentoring

The Life Coach Mentoring program pairs each youth in the facility with a trained staff member who works regularly with their assigned youth. The staff provide no official function other than to encourage and support the youth as they prepare for the challenging transition of re-entering their community. The Pere Marquette model is predicated on promoting and supporting positive behavior from youth, and having a life coach has proven instrumental in maintaining the rehabilitative character of the facility.

Independent Living Programming

The Bachelor Pad life-skills program provides youth an opportunity to learn the fundamentals of independent living. At the time of JHA's visit, the apartment, or "Bachelor Pad," was nearly finished and youth had begun the classroom module of the program. Youth are given training in basic maintenance, cleaning, and other life-skills before they stay in the "Bachelor Pad," a room refurbished as a studio apartment. To be eligible, youth must be at least 16 years old, because these young men are more likely to transition to independent living in the near future. JHA is encouraged by the philosophy of the program and will continue to monitor it.

Pere Marquette is working with several outside groups to help train youth for specific jobs and then place them in programming once they leave the facility, all to further the potential for independent living upon release from DJJ. Pere Marquette is currently in discussions with the Ameren Corporation, a power company, to set up a vocational training program where the youth

⁵ March 22, 2012, phone call with Superintendent McKinney

will learn a trade, and then prepare for and take an admissions test. If they pass the test, Ameren will hire them to work for the company upon their release. There are two other similar programs that the facility is also hoping to put in place. One is a local resort and the other is the Alton Housing Authority. Each of these employers would train youth in basic maintenance with an eye towards future hiring. There is also some exploration being done with regards to daytime release for some youth to do maintenance at a local business. The youth will be trained in basic maintenance and upkeep such as wiring and plumbing, and they will be paid for their work while gaining a skill.⁶

Community Reintegration

Staff members conduct a number of off-site field trips for small numbers of youth. These are often organized by individual staff members and demonstrate a significant amount of dedication to the restorative justice model. Field trips have included weekly swimming trips at Principia College, movies, and volunteer work. An example of the positive impact of community involvement is the Alton food pantry volunteer work the youth have done. They prepare bags of food to be handed out and also conduct inventory. Staff report that the youth enjoy the opportunity to volunteer and really feel like they are giving back to the community. Bringing youth out into the community is a vital step to successful re-entry and JHA will continue to monitor its implementation.

Re-Entry Planning

The facility's most impressive programming continues to be its re-entry planning. While the facility seeks to hire another Re-Entry Counselor - a position dedicated to tracking youth upon release, planning for re-entry, and increasing youth's chances of success - the facility's mental health and substance abuse treatment staff have worked to fulfill the responsibilities pending new hires. Working together, mental health, substance abuse treatment providers, Youth and Family Specialists, and a Field Service Representative coordinate a holistic reentry plan. Parents and guardians of youth under 18 are encouraged to participate in the development of a Re-Entry plan, and youth over 18 are given a choice of whether or not they want a parent or guardian to participate. As the composition of youth at the facility changes, mental health and substance abuse treatment staff alter their programming to best serve the population. All youth are also given a State ID card through a partnership with the Illinois Secretary of State, and 10 youth have now qualified for and received their driver's permits through a cooperative plan with the Illinois Department of Revenue.⁷

JHA notes that one of the strengths of this programming is how closely the substance abuse treatment program and the mental health unit work together. These two programs run small, customized groups. They also have two family sessions a month to work through issues and discuss concerns in that forum as a way to create more support for the youth in terms of family

⁶ These initiatives were detailed by Superintendent Karen McKinney in a phone call with JHA staff, March 22, 2012.

⁷ *Id*

understanding. JHA commends this effort and sees it as an essential part of the kind of comprehensive planning that benefits youth.

To facilitate a smooth transition back into the community, staff begins the school registration process for the public education system, and when appropriate, helps youth complete college and financial aid applications. Upon release, youth are given six months of follow up calls by facility staff, and staff also monitor updates from the youths' parole officers. Staff members report that many youth voluntarily continue to call the facility to check-in for weeks or months after release. The facility is beginning to track rates of recidivism. JHA hopes that this data will be used system wide to improve re-entry planning across DJJ.

Education

Educational programming continues to be a concern, mostly due to staff shortages. Seven days prior to the visit (five business days), a number of youth arrived at the facility. While youth are required to be enrolled in school within 10 days, the low numbers of youth at Pere Marquette makes it reasonable to enroll students in a much shorter period. The principal, who was a reassigned teacher, went on a leave of absence shortly after the arrival of these youth, without registering all of them for school or creating a registration plan. At the time of the JHA visit, only three students were enrolled in the school and had been for that week, with no plan in place to register the other youth. The pace of school enrollment raises concerns regarding Pere Marquette's transition to full capacity; JHA will continue its monitoring efforts throughout 2012 and plans to issue a full report later this year.

Summary

Beyond the step-down program, there are general policies in place that have significantly changed the character of Pere Marquette. Youth report, for example, that they enjoy the food. Also of note is that the showers have curtains, something not implemented at any other male facility in DJJ. Youth report that they greatly prefer this privacy. Given the high rates of trauma amongst youth in corrections this simple change has significance.⁸

Another new improvement at Pere Marquette is the Youth Advisory Board. This program provides an opportunity for youth to meet and bring concerns to administration regarding operations, overall programming, and privileges within the facility. Input is taken and considered, and at times acted upon, depending on what constraints exist. This program promotes responsibility, communication, and independence among youth. JHA is impressed by the Youth Advisory Board, and we recommend that this program be put in place in all DJJ facilities.

Pere Marquette is not without challenges. The facility was not built to house a step-down program, although it was developed to be minimum security. Youth sleep in locked cells at night that have no toilets. In order to use the washroom at night they must contact security. In February 2012, Pere Marquette was slated to reach capacity, increasing already significant concerns about staff shortages. As mentioned, at the time of JHA's visit, there were only two

⁸ see section "IYC-Harrisburg"

teachers working, with one on leave of absence and no principal. As JHA saw during the visit, there are concerns regarding the facility's ability to absorb a significant number of youth.

JHA published no recommendations for the facility in our last report, however JHA noted it would monitor the hiring of a librarian and the hiring of more teaching staff. At the time of this report, neither position had been filled.

In JHA's subsequent report, staff will monitor the following areas:

- (1) Transition counseling for youth before they are transferred to Pere Marquette.
- (2) Pere Marquette's ability to provide programs that meet the needs of an increased number of youth. This will include:
 - (a) Life coaching
 - (b) Bachelor Pad Life Skills program,
 - (c) Off-site field trips,
 - (d) Re-entry planning and follow up, and,
 - (e) Mental health and substance use curriculum flexibility.
- (3) Proposed vocational training for youth through community partnerships.
- (4) Hiring of necessary school staff.
- (5) A plan to complete school registration quickly upon youth arrival at the facility, even with staff shortages.

Additional Areas to Monitor throughout DJJ facilities in 2012

As JHA begins its 2012 reporting period, there are a number of department-wide areas of interest that will be monitored. Recently, Superintendent Dr. Kye Gaffey joined Illinois School District #428, the district that oversees all DJJ facilities. As one of his first initiatives, he sought to exempt the school district from the state Physical Education (PE) requirement. Most juvenile facilities do not have a PE teacher, complicating youth's ability to graduate while in state care unless they had PE credit prior to entering the system. The myriad of push and pull factors inherent to an understaffed and underfunded education program lead many youth to complete the high school equivalency test, GED, instead of obtaining a high school diploma. Research, however, indicates across multiple metrics that GED recipients do not fare as well as high school graduates in the labor market.⁹ GED recipients, while better equipped than high school dropouts, are still disadvantaged. An inability to graduate while under state care in DJJ is a particularly troubling situation.

In addition to graduation, DJJ facilities hold great potential for vocational training and education. Many facilities have working facilities for horticulture and construction operations programs. The programs that are functioning are not always able to provide certification because many

⁹ See Suh-Ruu Ou, *Do GED Recipients Differ From Graduates and School Dropouts? Findings From an Inner-City Cohort*, 43 *Urban Education*, 83 (2008).

certification programs have a minimum age requirement that the youth do not satisfy. For those who are old enough, and in compliance with the other aspects of certification, a vocational certificate could provide them with a competitive edge in the labor market.

Conclusion

Given the state's finances and potential facility closures, Harrisburg, Murphysboro, and Pere Marquette are at a critical crossroads. Times of transition are important stress tests that demonstrate not just the health of the current system, but can also provide the impetus for change. While we noted areas of criticism in this report, JHA was also impressed with many of the programs and initiatives in DJJ's South Facilities. As DJJ adjusts to necessary cuts in its budget, JHA advocates for continued and increased focus on helping youth successfully reenter society, which will ultimately decrease the number of young people committed to state correctional facilities and the high costs of maintaining them.

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Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois' juvenile and adult correctional facilities. Every year, JHA staff and trained volunteers inspect prisons, jails and detention centers throughout the state. Based on these inspections, JHA regularly issues reports that are instrumental in improving prison conditions.

Models for **Change**
Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

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