



John Howard Association of Illinois

375 East Chicago Avenue, Suite 529 Chicago, IL 60611
Tel. 312-503-6300 Fax. 312-503-6306 www.thejha.org

Monitoring Visit to Dwight Correctional Center 8/16/2011

The John Howard Association (JHA) visited Dwight Correctional Center (Dwight) on August 16, 2011. Dwight is the state's only Level One maximum-security adult female facility. Dwight also houses medium and minimum-security inmates, as well as the intake, classification and processing center for adult female offenders for the entire state. The facility is located in Dwight, Illinois, about one and one half hours southwest of Chicago.



Vital Statistics

Population: 1008

Rated Capacity: 684

Average Annual Cost Per Inmate: \$33,977

Average Age: 36

Source: DOC, Quarterly Report, January 2012

Key Observations

- Approximately 78 percent of Dwight's inmates have children. On average, Dwight houses 26 pregnant inmates at a given time.
- On the date of JHA's visit, more than half of Dwight's population was taking psychotropic medications.
- While most of Illinois prisons have minimal programming, Dwight offers inmates a comparatively large number of educational and vocational opportunities.
- While JHA commends DOC and Dwight's administration's recognition of gender differences in their programming and operations, we believe, in accordance with human rights standards, that only female correctional officers should supervise female inmates' living quarters.
- Since JHA's visit, Dwight has made several improvements in its policies and programming, which are noted in the body of the report.
- The racial demographics of Dwight's population were: 48 percent African American; 41 percent white; nine percent Hispanic; one percent Native American; and one percent Asian.

Monitoring Visit to Dwight Correctional Center 8/16/2011

Executive Summary

Like other Illinois correctional facilities, Dwight struggles under the burdens of overcrowding, physical plant deterioration, understaffing of mental health, medical, correctional and clerical positions, and limited resources for education and programming. However, the management and supervision of female inmates present unique and, arguably, more complex challenges.

The vast majority of female inmates come from backgrounds of serious trauma and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Most inmates are also mothers, who were sole parent providers for their children prior to their incarceration, which raises complicated emotional and economic issues surrounding child placement, family dissolution and grief over separation from children. Female inmates also have substantially higher rates of mental illness, self-injuring behaviors, and drug abuse than male inmates.¹ Indeed, more than half the inmate population at Dwight is receiving psychotropic medications. Given this exceedingly high number, it was plain that two full-time psychologists and three part-time psychiatrists were insufficient to meet the mental health needs of Dwight's population.

Update: Since our visit, Dwight has increased its mental health staff to address these needs by hiring a licensed social worker, two psychologists, and receiving three interns from the Midwest University and Chicago School of Professional Psychology.

Despite understaffing and scarce resources, Dwight's administration and staff do a commendable job in maintaining the facility and implementing policies that recognize gender differences. One of the remarkable things that JHA was struck by in speaking with Dwight's Warden, Assistant Wardens, and administrators was their emphasis on the importance of acting with kindness, understanding, and compassion. This is significant because administrators in a correctional setting can have a profound impact in determining values and the culture of an organization. JHA saw the influence of these values in many of the programs at the facility. For instance, Dwight's administration has implemented an individualized incentive program aimed at reducing segregation time that allows inmates to reduce their time in segregation and regain privileges through good

¹ See Doris J. James and Lauren E. Glaze, *U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics: Special Report: Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates* (September, 2006) available at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/mhppji.pdf> .

behavior.² Administration is also implementing a new hospice program, modeled on the hospice program at Dixon Correctional Center, which is designed to assist aging female inmates with chronic illness to die with dignity. Twelve inmates have gone through training to provide hospice care to these inmates, and the program will be running in 2012.

While JHA commends Dwight's administration and staff for these efforts, we were concerned by the high volume of inmates who complained of feeling their bodies physically exposed to surveillance by male correctional officers in their living quarters. A significant number of inmates further reported instances of male correctional staff using excessive force or acting in a manner that was inappropriate or sexually suggestive. To the administration's credit, the informational materials provided to Dwight inmates spell out, in no uncertain terms, that every inmate has the right to be free from abuse and sexual coercion. The materials also provide inmates with an extensive list of both formal and informal mechanisms for inmates to report instances of abuse, depending on what is most comfortable for them. Importantly, inmates that JHA interviewed also expressed that they felt strong personal trust and confidence in the Warden, and that they could report problems to her without fear of reprisal.

However, JHA believes that more can and should be done system-wide to acknowledge gender differences and the needs and vulnerabilities of female inmates under male correctional supervision. Specifically, JHA believes that efforts should be made to strictly limit direct supervision of female inmates by male correctional staff, particularly in female housing units. In accord with this position, JHA therefore strongly supports the efforts of DOC's Director Godinez, who is exploring the possibility of hiring more female correctional staff and creating gender-specific assignments in female housing units.

Recommendations:

- (1) In accordance with Rule 53 of the *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, JHA recommends that DOC shall require women prisoners be "attended and supervised only by woman officers." As Rule 53 further notes, this standard "does not, however, preclude male members of the staff, particularly doctors and teachers, from carrying out their professional duties in institutions or parts of institutions set aside for women."³

² See Vera Institute of Justice: Segregation Reduction Project at <http://www.vera.org/project/segregation-reduction-project> for information on work to reduce the costly and counterproductive use of segregation in Illinois and other states.

³ See Rule 53 (3), Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/treatmentprisoners.htm>

- (2) JHA urges DOC to address the needs of monolingual Spanish-speaking inmates and inmates with limited English-speaking skills in Dwight and the Illinois prison system in general by ensuring these inmates have ready access to translation services. *While more needs to be done, Dwight's administration and staff have taken three important steps to address this problem since our visit: 1) they have expanded the use of bi-lingual posters, signs, and bulletins; 2) they have assigned a staff member to review all written information for the offenders to ensure the language is appropriately translated into Spanish prior to the posting; and 3) they have posted a position for a bi-lingual Correctional Counselor.*
- (3) In accordance with the American Bar Association's *Criminal Justice Standards on the Legal Treatment of Prisoners* and Rule 21 of the *United Nations Standard Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, JHA asks that DOC reconsider its policy of punishing segregation inmates by eliminating or significantly reducing their yard and recreation time.⁴

This report examines the following issues: Population Demographics; Staff Conduct; Housing & Living Conditions; Mental Health and Medical Services & Substance Abuse Treatment; Education, Programming & Industries; Spanish-Speaking Inmates; and Segregation.

Population Demographics

Approximately 78 percent of Dwight's inmates have children. At the time of JHA's visit, 40 of Dwight's inmates were pregnant. Approximately eight percent of the population is age 50 or older. The average age of inmate is 36, and the average length of stay for an inmate at Dwight is one year. The youngest inmate at Dwight is 17, and the oldest is 77.

According to DOC's statistics of November 30, 2011, the breakdown of Dwight's population by class of offense (in descending order of severity) was: 236 Murder; 152 Class X felony; 115 Class 1 felony; 185 Class 2 felony; 146 Class 3 felonies; 173 Class 4 felonies; and 1 unclassified offense.⁵ There were 39 inmates serving life sentences. With

⁴ See ABA *Criminal Justice Standards on the Legal Treatment of Prisoners*, Standards 23-3.7 and 23-3.8, available at http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publishing/criminal_justice_section, which provide that restrictions relating to a prisoner's programming or other privileges, whether as a disciplinary sanction or otherwise, should not be permitted to eliminate a prisoner's access to exercise, and prisoners in segregated housing should be provided with "meaningful forms of mental, physical, and social stimulation" including out-of-cell time and the opportunity to exercise in the presence of other prisoners. See also *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, Rule 21, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/treatmentprisoners>, which provides: "Every prisoner who is not employed in outdoor work shall have at least one hour of suitable exercise in the open air daily if the weather permits."

⁵ See DOC Quarterly Report for January 1, 2012, available at http://www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/reports/quarterly_reports/DOC_Quarterly_Report_Jan_2012.pdf

respect to the security classifications of Dwight inmates, administration reported that 25 percent were designated maximum security, 34 percent medium security, and 39 percent minimum security. Dwight's administration reported that it has seen a noticeable increase in the number of older offenders convicted of property and theft offenses, such as embezzlement and misuse of funds. It attributed this trend to the failing economy, which increasingly has left many older women financially desperate and without any economic safety net.

The racial demographics of Dwight's population were: 48 percent African American; 41 percent white; nine percent Hispanic; one percent Native American; and one percent Asian.

Staff Conduct

JHA received a number of reports from inmates of male correctional officers acting in ways that were physically aggressive, inappropriate or sexually suggestive. JHA also received several reports of correctional officers yelling at inmates without provocation and being unduly harsh, degrading, and verbally abusive. For the most part, inmates' criticism was directed against younger male officers.

JHA has no information to independently confirm or deny inmates' reports of misconduct. However, the number of reports of staff misconduct we received from inmates raises serious concerns. It is also noteworthy that at the mid-year point in August 2011, the total number of grievances filed by inmates alleging staff misconduct was 73, nearly double the total number of grievances alleging staff misconduct that were filed in the entire year of 2010 (43 grievances in all).

Criticism of correctional staff was not universal, as JHA also received reports from inmates of correctional officers, both male and female, who were fair, kind, professional and evenhanded. Overall, however, inmates seemed to have much more positive feelings towards female correctional staff than male.

Understaffing of security positions may contribute to increasing job tension and stress for Dwight correctional officers and directly interfere with job effectiveness. Dwight is authorized to employ 249 Correctional Officers, 19 Lieutenants, 11 Sergeants, and 10 Majors. At the time of JHA's visit, Lieutenant and Sergeant positions were fully staffed, but there were job vacancies for one Major and four Correctional Officer positions. Compounding this problem, Dwight was also understaffed with administrative and clerical support staff. Consequently, four correctional staff must be redirected from their security duties to perform full-time clerical duties each week, for a total of 150 hours.

Even under the best of circumstances, the difficult job performed by correctional staff is stressful, dangerous, isolating, and demanding. When factors beyond correctional officers' control, like understaffing, overcrowding, extensive overtime, and rotating shift work are introduced into the workplace, these can increase stress, undermine officers'

morale and job performance, damage their physical and mental health and increase tension and conflict.⁶

Dwight's administration has installed additional monitoring cameras in the facility and would like to install more in the future, as it has found them effective in reducing both inmate assaults and staff misconduct. As it stands, however, funding is currently not available to allow increased installation of camera surveillance.

Apart from any misconduct, a great number of inmates expressed distress over lack of privacy and the feeling that their bodies were thoroughly exposed and on display to observation and surveillance by male officers in the housing units. One inmate suggested that inmates' living conditions could be immediately, dramatically improved by staffing Dwight only with female correctional officers or, barring that, hiring more female correctional officers.

Remarkably, this inmate's personal observation mirrors Rule 53 of the *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, which provides: (1) the part of the institution set aside for women shall be under the authority of a responsible woman officer who shall have the custody of the keys of all that part of the institution; (2) no male member of the staff shall enter the part of the institution set aside for women unless accompanied by a woman officer; and (3) women prisoners shall be attended and supervised only by women officers.⁷

The role of male correctional staff in female prisons undoubtedly presents a complex issue. Most incarcerated women have suffered a high degree of trauma, domestic violence, physical abuse, and/or sexual abuse primarily at the hands of male intimates, which can make them particularly vulnerable to retraumatization under a traditional "male" correctional model.⁸ A majority of correctional administrators across the country believe that successful supervision of female inmates requires a management style that is less authoritarian than the male correctional model and places more emphasis on open communication with inmates, active listening and awareness of emotional dynamics, the ability to respond to expressions of emotion, and fairness, firmness and consistency in responses.⁹

⁶ See National Institute of Justice, *Addressing Correctional Officer Stress: Programs and Strategies*, (December, 2000), available at <http://www.nij.gov/pubs-sum/183474.htm>.

⁷ See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/treatment_prisoners.htm.

⁸ See Dr. Stephanie S. Covington, Dr. Barbara E. Bloom, *Creating Gender-Responsive Services in Correctional Settings: Context and Considerations*, Paper Presented at American Society of Criminology Conference (November 17-20, 2004) available at <http://www.centerforgenderandjustice.org/pdf/2.pdf>.

⁹ See U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, *Women Offenders: Programming Needs and Promising Approaches* (August, 1998) available at <https://www.ncjrs.gov>, documenting nationwide survey of correctional administrators regarding the needs of female inmates in management and programming.

Most administrators and staff whom JHA spoke with at Dwight expressed similar opinions. Studies likewise confirm that rehabilitation and positive behavior are most likely to occur when female inmates feel safe and respected.¹⁰ Importantly, inmates that JHA questioned expressed strong personal trust in Dwight's Warden and felt that they could bring incidents of abuse or sexual misconduct to her attention without fear of reprisals.

Mistreatment, sexual coercion and exploitation of female prisoners have a long history in American prisons, and Illinois prisons are no exception.¹¹ Any solution to this problem necessarily must begin with educating staff on gender differences and on the prior abuse and trauma suffered by most female offenders so that efforts can be made to stop the pattern of victimization.

JHA was impressed by Dwight's Orientation Manual and Offender Handbook, which informs inmates in the strongest language possible that they have the right to be safe from all forms of physical abuse, sexual assault and unwanted sexual behavior and must report incidents of misconduct; that reports of misconduct will be kept confidential and revealed only to persons who need to make decisions to protect the inmate's welfare; and that inmates should report incidents to a staff member they trust by any means available, be it through speaking with a chaplain, counselor, or doctor, writing a request to speak privately with the Warden, the Assistant Wardens or Internal Affairs, or writing a letter directly to the Director of DOC.¹²

JHA greatly commends Dwight's administration in taking concrete steps to encourage and facilitate inmates reporting instances of abuse and mistreatment. However, JHA believes that more can be done, and that DOC should explore additional measures, in line with Model Rule 53, that limit the degree of direct supervision of female inmates by male officers. JHA was pleased to learn that DOC Director Godinez is pursuing such measures. Specifically, Director Godinez has called for the exploration of increased gender-specific hiring and assignments of female correctional officers in Dwight's

¹⁰ See Linda Sydney, *Gender-Responsive Strategies For Female Offenders* (October 2005), U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, available at <http://static.nicic.gov/Library/020419.pdf>.

¹¹ See Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Project: *All Too Familiar: Sexual Abuse of Women in U.S. State Prisons* (1996) available at <http://www.aclu.org/hrc/PrisonsStates.pdf>, documenting pervasive sexual harassment and abuse and privacy violations of female prisoners in state prisons.

¹² Dwight's Orientation Manual expressly provides: "You have the right to be safe from sexual assault while you are incarcerated. At no time does anyone have the right to pressure or force you into sexual activity. You do not have to tolerate sexual assault or pressure to engage in unwanted sexual behavior regardless of your age, size, race, or ethnicity. Whether you are straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual, you have the right to be safe from unwanted sexual advances and acts."

housing units and in all female housing units in Illinois prisons. JHA fully supports these efforts.¹³

Mental Health and Medical Services & Substance Abuse Treatment

On the date of JHA's visit, nine inmates were housed in Dwight's healthcare unit, and 48 inmates were housed in its mental health unit. The healthcare unit has the capacity to house 18 inmates, and the mental health unit has the capacity to house 53 inmates. A mixture of state employees and contract employees from Wexford Healthcare provide healthcare services.

Mental Health Services

At the time of JHA's visit, 527 inmates, over half Dwight's population, were taking psychotropic medications. Of these, 11 inmates were receiving psychotropic medications involuntarily. These numbers were substantially higher than at male facilities JHA has visited. (For instance, in JHA's last report on Stateville Correctional Center, we noted that 230 out of 1,608 inmates were on psychotropic medication.¹⁴) A mental health staff member that JHA spoke with agreed the number of Dwight inmates taking psychotropic medications was on the "high side," but indicated that this was not unusual for a female correctional facility.

Staff noted that a substantial number of Dwight inmates engage in cutting, self-mutilation, or other self-injuring behaviors. In years 2010-2011, three Dwight inmates committed suicide. According to administration, most suicide attempts involve inmates overdosing on medications they have "hoarded" over time. All medication overdoses, even those accidentally performed by inmates in an attempt to get "high," are treated as suicide attempts.

A mental health staff member estimated that the majority of Dwight's inmates suffer from mood disorders. Staff estimated that of the inmates prescribed psychotropics, roughly 400 inmates were taking anti-depressants or bi-polar medications, 60 were taking anti-psychotic medications, and the rest were taking anti-anxiety medications. The high number of Dwight inmates taking psychotropic medication may be accounted for by reason that the majority of female offenders come from backgrounds of severe abuse and victimization, and have much higher rates of mental health problems, including posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, phobias, neurosis, self-mutilation and

¹³ See Minutes of the July 25, 2011, meeting of the DOC Advisory Board Women's Issues Subcommittee, available at www.idoc.state.il.us/.../20110725%20-%20Subcommittee%20Minute, describing DOC's plans to increase gender-specific assignments.

¹⁴ See JHA's Monitoring Visit to Stateville Correctional Center, 7/13/2011, available at http://www.thejha.org/sites/default/files/JHA_Stateville_Monitoring_Report.pdf.

suicide, than both the general public and male prisoners.¹⁵ Indeed, a study by the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that 73 percent of women in state prisons and 75 percent of the women in jails in the United States have symptoms of mental disorders versus 12 percent women in the general population.¹⁶ However, in the absence of sufficient mental health staff or resources to provide these inmates with the psychological therapy and counseling, concerns have also been raised by some experts over a tendency in correctional institutions to overmedicate female prisoners with psychotropics to control and sedate them.¹⁷

JHA cannot speak to whether the high number inmates being treated with psychotropics at Dwight is evidence of overmedication or simply reflective of the higher rates of mental illness generally found in female inmate populations. However, it is the case that Dwight, like other Illinois facilities, suffers from understaffing of mental health professionals and insufficient resources to provide regular psychological counseling to all the inmates who could benefit from it. This situation is compounded by the fact that Dwight also houses Reception and Classification (DRC), the intake, classification, and processing center for adult female offenders for the entire state. While Dwight was authorized for four full-time psychologists, on the date of JHA's visit there were two staff vacancies, leaving two full-time psychologists (80 hours per week in total) to meet the needs of inmates at both Dwight and DRC. Together these facilities were also staffed with one full-time social worker, and three part-time psychiatrists (for a total of 75 hours per week). Twenty hours of Dwight's psychiatrist coverage is provided via telepsychiatry. According to a staff member, telepsychiatry is efficient when used properly, and is best limited to inmates in the general population who are not severely mentally ill.

With these staffing levels, there are not enough resources to regularly provide all mentally ill inmates with psychological counseling. According to staff, however, apart from group therapy offered to inmates in the mental health unit and substance abuse programs, psychological counseling is not widely or regularly available. For the most part, one-on-one counseling is "crisis based," and available only to inmates in urgent, immediate need of intervention. Staff reported that there is a three-week wait period for inmates with non-emergent mental health issues to be seen by a psychiatrist. Staff indicated that more psychiatrists were still needed by Dwight/DRC, but that the situation had improved, as before there had been about a three-month wait period to be seen by a psychiatrist.

¹⁵ See Report of World Health Organization, *Women's Health In Prison: Correcting Gender Inequity In Prison Health* (2009), available at <http://www.unodc.org/documents/commissions>.

¹⁶ See Lauren E. Glaze, Doris J. James, *Mental Health Problems of Prison and Jail Inmates*, Bureau of Justice Statistics (September 6, 2006), available at <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov>.

¹⁷ See Barbara H. Zaitzow, *The Psychotropic Control of Women Prisoners: The Perpetuation of Abuse of Imprisoned Women*, Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice Policy Journal, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall, 2010), available at http://www.cjcj.org/files/Psychotropic_Control.pdf.

A Dwight administrator summed up the situation as follows: “It wears us out trying to protect them from themselves.” Another staff member expressed that given the great number of inmates struggling with trauma and mental illness, it would make good clinical sense to have a social worker permanently assigned to each and every housing unit — particularly to assist inmates nearing their release dates with finding mental health and reentry services and housing placements.

Update: Since our visit, Dwight has increased its mental health staff to address these needs by additionally hiring a Licensed Social Worker, two Licensed Psychologists, and receiving three interns from the Midwest University and Chicago School of Professional Psychology. According to Dwight’s Warden, the addition of more staff has made a “big difference” and is a “great improvement.”

JHA was impressed with the knowledge and dedication of the mental health staff we interviewed and their compassion towards female inmates and their histories of trauma and abuse. According to staff, one of their great challenges and frustrations is finding and connecting inmates to psychiatric treatment, placements and re-entry services in the community to allow for their continuity of care upon release. Budget cuts to city, county and county mental health services and the closing of a great number of community health mental health centers have left inmates in Illinois and across the country with few options for continuing mental health treatment upon reentry.¹⁸

In particular, staff noted that outside of the Chicago area, there are desperately few reentry, placement and mental health resources for inmates. Absent connection to mental health services in the community, these inmates are likely to cycle back through the criminal justice system and return to prison, perpetuating the cycle of overcrowding at great cost to the public.

Medical Services

At the time of JHA’s visit, Dwight was considered to be “fully staffed” with authorized physicians, since it was staffed with two part-time physicians for a combined total 48 hours per week. Medical staff that JHA spoke with indicated that Dwight greatest need is additional nurses.¹⁹

¹⁸ See National Alliance on Mental Illness, *State Mental Health Cuts: The Continuing Crisis* (November, 2011), available at www.nami.org/StateMentalHealthCuts2.pdf.

¹⁹ JHA was unable to obtain data on the number of full and part time nurses employed at the facilities at the time of our visit. However, administration reported that the combined authorized nursing hours for the two facilities were: 415 hours per week of RN (Registered Nurse) coverage and 305 hours per week of LPN (Licenses Practical Nurse) coverage. The minimum nursing staff levels required for the two facilities to be deemed operative are: Monday thru Friday, seven to eight nurses on the 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. shift, four nurses on the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift; and three nurses on the 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift; and, on Saturdays and Sundays, three nurses on all shifts. Staff reported that because of the high number of inmates taking medications, the facility is in need of additional nurses to help distribute medications.

Telemedicine is used to provide specialty care to inmates who have HIV. However, as at other facilities, JHA heard reports from inmates of being unable to obtain referrals to specialists for other conditions. For example, an inmate reported to JHA that she had been waiting months to obtain referral to a specialist to treat a persistent rash that had not responded to treatment by Dwight's physicians and now covered her body.

At the time of JHA's visit, one inmate required regular dialysis treatment. However, staff reported there have been periods where as many as eight to twelve inmates required dialysis. With regard to reproductive health, inmates are offered regular yearly pap smears and gynecology exams. For inmates over 40, regular yearly mammograms are provided if ordered by a physician. Pregnant inmates receive prenatal care in the form of vitamins and routine checkups, as well as special pregnancy dietary trays and the opportunity to participate in low-impact exercise classes for pregnant mothers. In addition, inmates are provided with prenatal and postnatal counseling.

Number of Dwight Inmates Diagnosed with Chronic Illness	
Asthma	104
Cancer	0
Diabetes	54
Hepatitis C	57
HIV	15
Hypertension	189
Tuberculosis	4

Administration reported that DOC policy prohibits shackling pregnant inmates in transport or during labor. Since our visit, the policy has been codified and strengthened when Governor Quinn signed HB 1958 into law on January 13, 2012.

Except for those inmates accepted into DOC's Moms and Babies residential program that allows qualified inmates to reside with their newborns at Decatur Correctional Center, inmates are separated from their newborns shortly after birth. According to administration, most newborns are placed in the guardianship of an inmate's family member, and the Department of Children and Family Services is only called in to find placement after efforts to find a suitable family member guardian have been exhausted.

With respect to dental care, Dwight was considered to be fully staffed with authorized dental providers, having two part-time dentists (for a total of 40 hours per week), one part-time dental hygienist for 20 hours per week, and two full-time dental assistants (for a total of 80 hours per week). Even with authorized dental positions filled, there is a three and a half month delay and backlog of 227 patients waiting to receive dental treatment when JHA visited. Likewise, there was a delay of three months and backlog of 192 inmates waiting to receive eye care.

Substance Abuse Treatment

Substance abuse treatment is provided through the Wells Center treatment program. At the time of JHA's visit, 115 inmates were receiving substance abuse treatment through the program and five inmates were on the waiting list. An additional 28 inmates were receiving treatment for a dual diagnosis (*i.e.* substance abuse coupled with mental

illness), and 24 inmates were on the waiting list to receive dual diagnosis treatment. Inmates convicted of any crime can participate in the program. The only restriction on participation is length of sentence, in that an inmate must have less than 20 years left to serve on her sentence to be admitted into the program.

Substance abuse therapy is modeled in part on a Twelve-Step program and includes individual and group therapy sessions. Focus is placed on teaching inmates skills for making healthier choices, changing their lifestyles, and preventing relapse behaviors. In addition, emphasis is placed on helping inmates to identify and address the “root” of addictive behaviors, which often stem from childhood trauma and abuse. Inmates are also provided with opportunities to increase their job preparedness through mock interviews and job skills sessions. Once a month, inmates in the program meet individually with their program counselor.

Inmates that JHA interviewed expressed positive feelings about the program. For instance, an inmate in the program expressed to JHA that the counselors treated inmates like “human beings,” which allowed inmates to be open and honest with the counselors in return. This inmate further expressed that the counselors actually “cared” for inmates, even though “they did not have to.”

Another representative inmate that JHA spoke with, who was in the dual diagnosis treatment program and suffered from bi-polar disorder and drug addiction, expressed that the program had “changed her life” and made her “feel like a whole new person.” She explained that the program helped increase her self-esteem and deal with her feelings of anger. She further reported that because of tools she had learned in the program, she was able to reconnect with her mother and open up to her about things she had gone through.

The most obvious flaw JHA encountered with the substance abuse treatment program is that limited resources and staffing prevent it from being offered to more inmates. DOC previously estimated that while 80 percent of female inmates need drug treatment, treatment is available to only about 20 percent of them.²⁰ A recent Illinois study confirms that female inmates who are provided drug treatment while incarcerated are less likely to be rearrested following release than female inmates who did not receive substance abuse treatment.²¹ Failing to provide female inmates with meaningful access to substance abuse treatment ultimately undermines public welfare and wastes scarce public funds, as it costs far more to build prisons and continually re-incarcerate drug offenders than to provide them with effective drug abuse treatment during their incarceration.

²⁰ Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers: *Women in Prison Factsheet*, available at <http://www.claim-il.org>.

²¹ David E. Olson, Gipsy Escobar, and Loretta Stalans, *An Examination of Admissions, Exits and End-Of-Year-Populations of Adult Female Inmates in Illinois Department of Corrections, State Fiscal Years 1989 to 2010* (June 2011), Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, available at www.icjia.state.il.us/public/pdf/.../female_inmate_report_062011.pdf.

Education, Programming & Industries

Like other Illinois facilities, Dwight struggles with understaffing and lack of resources to provide education and programming to inmates. Compared to other Illinois correctional facilities, however, the breadth and variety of education and programming that Dwight offers to inmates is noteworthy. It was clear from speaking with Dwight's administrators that providing inmates with education, job skills and training is not a secondary concern, but a top priority to the administration, which is reflected in some of the creative and innovative programming the administration has brought to the facility.

In visiting the education building, JHA was struck by the commitment expressed by the teachers we interviewed. At the time of our visit, Dwight was authorized for five ABE/GED teachers, but was making due with three. The situation was mitigated somewhat by the assistance of six volunteer tutors supervised by an instructor from Lakeland College.

At the time of JHA's visit, a total of 71 inmates were enrolled in seven ABE classes, and there were 35 inmates on the waitlist. A total of 45 inmates were enrolled in GED classes, for which there was no waitlist. The inmates we spoke with in classes generally expressed positive feelings about their teachers and classes.

Unlike most correctional facilities, Dwight is also staffed with a full-time professional librarian who has a Masters degree in Library Science and serves as the facility's paralegal as well. Inmates may check out books from the facility's well-stocked general library. Staff reported there was a backlog of inmates waiting to visit the general reading library, but no backlog of inmates needing access to the law library services.

In addition to ABE and GED classes, Dwight offers several eight-week community college classes taught by instructors from Lakeland College. At the time of JHA's visit, a total of 60 inmates were enrolled in these classes. Course offerings include vocational classes in cosmetology, service dog training, dog grooming, commercial cooking, and career technologies. Teaching staff that we questioned indicated that they would like to see an increase in vocational programming, to include training in landscaping and janitorial maintenance.

Inmates may also work towards obtaining an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts studies, and are offered such college-level courses like composition, American history, world history, art history, math, psychology and marketing.

Dwight also prides itself on running several unique, very successful industries that provide job training and skills to inmates. Impressively, these industries are totally self-supporting and are not paid for by tax dollars. For instance, Dwight's garment shop, which employs 53 inmates, produces between 7,000 to 10,000 items per month that are purchased by DOC and non-profit agencies. Dwight's Helping Paws program employs seven inmates in training service dogs for disabled persons. Dwight's dog grooming

program employs three inmates in providing grooming to the staff service dogs and to the local community. During the time that inmates are training service dogs, the dogs live with them in their cells. Inmates that JHA spoke with in the PAWS program were extremely enthusiastic about it, and said that having the companionship of a dog, doing something productive, and knowing that their work would later benefit disabled persons made them happy and proud.

Dwight's administration is also in the midst of implementing an ambitious Hospice Program where inmates will be trained to care for fellow inmates who are infirm and have debilitating illness.

JHA commends Dwight's administration for its efforts to expand educational and vocational opportunities for inmates, and to institute inventive programming to improve inmates' quality of life, self-esteem, and their chances for rehabilitation.

Update: Since our visit, Dwight has expanded its green initiatives. For instance, Dwight recently received a grant to expand its garden and put in worm beds. In this program, inmates in the kitchen process food scraps through a grinder and distribute compost in dirt beds with worms. The worm castings are then used as fertilizer in Dwight's vegetable gardens, which are also planted and maintained by inmates. Dwight has also recruited a University of Illinois official to train inmates how to compost. This program is based on a similar initiative at Pontiac Correctional Center.

Spanish-Speaking Inmates

A Spanish-speaking member of JHA's monitoring team had the opportunity to interview monolingual inmates and Spanish-dominant inmates during the visit. She found that lack of bilingual staff severely isolates these inmates and prevents them from being able to access basic services. These inmates reported feeling scared, helpless, and confused, never knowing what reaction their inability to speak English would elicit from correctional staff and administrators. Spanish-dominant inmates also reported being vulnerable to violations of their privacy and confidentiality because, in the absence of bilingual staff, they must rely predominantly on bilingual inmates to translate and communicate their medical and private needs to staff members.

Some Spanish-dominant inmates indicated they were yelled at and reprimanded by correctional staff because they could not understand directions and orders given to them. At the time of JHA's visit, there were very few signs posted in Spanish and Spanish grievance forms were readily not available. However, Dwight's Inmate Orientation Manual was available in Spanish.

Administration reported that some staff members are bilingual and that telephonic translation services are also available to assist inmates in medical interactions. Administration further reported that it is against prison rules for inmates to translate for

each other because of confidentiality concerns and the risk that inmates needing translation will be vulnerable to exploitation by other inmates. Spanish-dominant inmates reported, however, that the reality is they must rely largely on each other for translation, and information because staff members are rarely available to translate for them.

Compounding their isolation and alienation, Spanish-dominant inmates are excluded from most educational programming, vocational training and prison job opportunities, other than work in the kitchen, by virtue of language barriers. No special programming in Spanish is available. Inmates indicated they greatly desired English language classes so that they could participate in rehabilitative programming and job opportunities. Administration reported that it was in the process of trying to hire a bilingual correctional counselor.

JHA urges DOC to address the needs of monolingual Spanish-speaking inmates and inmates with limited English-speaking skills in the Illinois prison system, as these problems are ubiquitous and not unique to Dwight. The welfare and safety of non-English speaking inmates is compromised where, by reason of the language barriers and lack of bilingual staff and translation services, these inmates cannot reasonably access even basic services like medical care, grievance procedures, and essentially all rehabilitative programming. Absent action to address the basic needs of this extremely vulnerable and largely overlooked inmate population, courts may ultimately have to intercede in litigation to protect these inmates' rights.²²

Update: Since our visit, Dwight's administration and staff have taken three important steps to address this problem: 1) they have expanded the use of bi-lingual posters, signs, and bulletins; 2) they have assigned a staff member to review all written information for the offenders to ensure the language is appropriately translated into Spanish prior to the posting; and 3) they have posted a position for a bi-lingual Correctional Counselor.

Housing & Living Conditions

Dwight housed 1015 inmates on the date of JHA's visit, roughly 149 percent over its design-rated capacity of 684 inmates. Housing consists of 45 single cells, 538 double cells, eight multi-occupancy cells, and four twelve-person dormitories. Units are not air-conditioned, but administration monitors temperatures and distributes ice to inmates when temperatures get high.

Several inmates reported that living quarters were too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. Some inmates reported that the large, uncovered external windows in housing units left them without privacy and feeling that their bodies were exposed to male

²² To illustrate, recently in *U.S. v. Maricopa County, Arizona Sheriff's Office*, the U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division sued Maricopa County jail for discriminatory jail practices in punishing Latino inmates with limited English proficiency for failing to understand commands given in English and denying them critical services provided to all other inmates. See *U.S. Department of Justice Reports and Publications*, available at http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/spl/documents/mcso_findletter_12-15-11.pdf

surveillance from outside. An inmate reported that when she tried to temporarily block a window to give a cellmate some privacy, she was given a ticket.

With respect to clothing, administration indicated that general population inmates are issued: three pairs of blue pants and three white shirts, three bras, three pairs of socks and three pairs of underwear, a coat, a pair of gloves, a stocking cap, a robe, one pair of pajamas, and one pair of gym shoes. If an inmate has a work assignment, she is also issued a pair of work boots.

Several inmates that JHA spoke with complained of clothing shortages, especially of winter clothing, and of not having access to enough clean clothes during the week. In particular, one inmate that JHA interviewed indicated that access to laundry service was problematic in her housing unit because there were too many inmates and only one washer and dryer to share between them. Another inmate noted that the tennis shoes that are given to inmates who did not have work assignments are inadequate in winter, because they become soaked with snow and precipitation. Thus, many inmates have to walk around wearing cold and wet shoes all day.

Both general population and segregation inmates are permitted to shop at the commissary once per week. As at other DOC facilities, JHA heard a substantial number of complaints from Dwight inmates that commissary prices are too expensive, especially for inmates who do not have friends or family that can afford to put money in their prison trust fund accounts.

JHA also heard numerous reports from Dwight inmates of grievance forms being timely filed by inmates, but lost or never responded to. Again, reports of these problems are not unique to Dwight, but are ubiquitous throughout DOC. JHA has repeatedly received reports of lack consistency, credibility, responsiveness, due process, accountability and reliability in DOC's grievance process from a multitude of inmates at every facility we have visited.²³

Dwight's general population inmates are allowed a substantial amount of out-of-cell time, and are only required to be in their cells during head counts and during bedtimes, from 8:30 p.m. until 5:30 a.m. They are allowed at least three and a half hours of recreation and gym time three days a week. They are also provided with opportunities to participate in additional recreational activities, like exercise classes. Special classes and activities are

²³ Studies confirm that in the absence of strong external controls and oversight, internal grievance systems tend to transform into control mechanisms that primarily serve bureaucratic and institutional interests, particularly where powerless populations like prisoners are involved. A reliable, responsive grievance system is vital to check and prevent mistreatment of inmates. See Rebecca L. Bordt, Michael C. Musheno, *Bureaucratic Co-Optation of Informal Dispute Processing: Control as an Effect of Inmate Grievance Policy*, *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* (February, 1988) Vol. 25; No. 1, 7-26, available at <http://jrc.sagepub.com/content/25/1/7.full.pdf+html>.

also offered to elderly inmates (aged 50 and older), such as Pilates, Geri-Active exercise class, and knitting and crocheting.

General population inmates are allowed unlimited phone calls (up to 15 minutes in duration), and an unlimited number of personal visits each month. Personal visits last at least one hour and, when the visiting room and visiting schedule are not full, visits can last all day between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

JHA commends Dwight's administration for maintaining liberal visitation policies and providing inmates, a majority of whom are mothers, with opportunities to maintain their mother-child relationships and nurture their children. For instance, in summer months the facility holds day camps every Saturday for inmates and their children under the age of 15 at which they can bond and participate in activities together. Providing inmates with such visitation programming is critical, as it helps to reduce recidivism and lay the foundation for family reunification after an inmate's release.²⁴

JHA was also impressed by the cheerful, non-institutional appearance and comforting atmosphere in many parts of the facility. Dwight's visiting room was clean, bright and sported a new wall mural painted by inmates. The gym was clean, well-maintained, and well-outfitted with donated exercise equipment, and its walls are covered by colorful, inspirational murals. The gym is also outfitted with a large television for playing exercise instructional videos. The facility's grounds were beautiful, scattered throughout with flowers, gardens and trees, all planted and maintained by inmates. Inspirational posters lined the walls of Dwight's education building and classrooms.

Unlike many correctional facilities, JHA encountered a sense of pride, care and investment in Dwight as a community among many staff and administrators. It is also clear that Dwight's administration strongly believes in the value of maintaining a facility environment that is aesthetically pleasing for the inmates and staff who reside there. Projects initiated by Dwight's administration strongly reflect this philosophy.

For example, in August 2011, Dwight's administration implemented a tree planting project, in which inmates dug holes and planted 100 new trees on Dwight's grounds with funds donated by inmates, staff, administrators. A tree-planting ceremony was held for inmates and staff to commemorate the project. Administration also initiated a painting project in which inmates in the housing units, under supervision, were given paint and allowed to freshly paint their living quarters. On discovering unused television stands being stored in a portion of the facility, administration distributed them to inmates.

To its credit, Dwight's administration has also made substantial physical improvements to the facility. For instance, every housing unit was repainted over the past year. Inmates'

²⁴ See Jade S. Laughlin, Bruce A. Arrigo, Kristie R. Blevins and Charisse T. M. Coston, *Incarcerated Mothers and Child Visitation : A Law, Social Science, and Policy Perspective*, Criminal Justice Policy Review , Volume 19, No. 2, 215-238 (June, 2008), available at <http://cjp.sagepub.com>.

old mattresses are in the process of being replaced with a new foam model that is cheaper, more durable, more comfortable and less of a security risk, as the mattresses are lined with clear coverings that prevent hiding contraband. Plasterwork and roofing repairs were also completed on two of the housing units. Administration indicated that new roofs were needed throughout the facility. JHA volunteers personally saw evidence of this need, noting water stains, missing tiles, and other signs of leaking in the education building. In addition, JHA volunteers noted tiles missing in some of the shower areas. Administration also indicated that while repairs had been made to the facility's waste water system, a new system is needed and likely will be installed in 2013.

Segregation

At the time of JHA's visit, there were 64 inmates in disciplinary segregation and 12 inmates in protective custody. In total, Dwight has the capacity to house 90 inmates in segregation and 24 in protective custody. They are celled in both single and double cells. On the date of JHA's visit, the vast majority of inmates in segregation were taking psychotropic medications or receiving mental health treatment. Specifically, 61 inmates were receiving mental health treatment; and, of these, 45 segregation inmates were also taking psychotropic drugs.

Segregation inmates who are classified as A grade or B grade (*i.e.* inmates who have limited disciplinary and behavior issues) are allowed one 15 minute phone call each week. Segregation inmates who are classified as C-grade (*i.e.* inmates who have lost privileges due to disciplinary problems) are not allowed to have phone calls unless they are pre-approved by the Duty Administrative Officer. Some segregation inmates reported to JHA that they were routinely denied phone calls.

Segregation inmates are allowed to keep only minimal personal property in their cells and must wear segregation "jumpsuits" rather than the two-piece uniforms worn by general population inmates. Inmates in segregation are allowed to shower three times a week, and are given limited quantities of toiletries at one time. JHA heard reports from some segregation inmates that their hygiene supplies are insufficient, as their toothpaste is expired and they are only provided with two bars of soap per month. Inmates also reported that they are not given enough sanitary napkins. Other segregation inmates reported that their cells were excessively cold in winter and that they were not provided with sufficient winter clothing. Some segregation inmates reported that insects and plumbing leaks were also problems in segregation cells.

Once a week, a librarian visits the segregation unit to provide inmates with access to law and library materials. Administration reported that, on average, segregation inmates are permitted one hour and 15 minutes of out-of-cell time per week. According to administration, inmates who have less than three months to serve in segregation are allowed one hour of outside recreation/ yard time one day per week. Inmates who have longer segregation times to serve (three months or more) are allowed one hour of outside recreation/yard time five days per week.

JHA was concerned to learn that a substantial number of segregation inmates (eight, according to inmates we spoke with) had been sanctioned for disciplinary infractions by having their out-of-cell yard and exercise time entirely suspended and limited to only one day per month. Access to yard and outdoor-exercise time, as much as food, water, and sanitation, is a basic human need.²⁵ In agreement with authorities like the American Bar Association and the *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, JHA believes that yard and exercise time should never be categorically denied to inmates as a form of punishment and encourages Dwight's administration and DOC to discontinue this practice.²⁶

Dwight's administration, however, is to be commended for instituting new measures aimed at reducing the use of segregation and improving quality of life for segregation inmates. For instance, to enhance the safety of inmates, Dwight's administration modified segregation cells by increasing the length of the windows in cell doors. Prior to modification, the windows in the segregation cells' doors were only eight inches long. This prevented staff from being able to easily see into cells to monitor inmates and check on their wellbeing. The modified windows, now 18 inches long, allow staff to see into all areas of the segregation cells and monitor inmates much more effectively.

Administration also described how, in consultation with the Vera Institute for Justice's Segregation Reduction Project, it instituted an individualized incentive program that allows segregation inmates to reduce their time in segregation and regain privileges through good behavior.²⁷ At the time of JHA's visit, nine inmates were participating in this incentive program.

As described by administration, in order to be eligible for the incentive program, a segregation inmate must be free of disciplinary tickets for a defined period of time - the length of which depends upon the length of time the inmate must serve in segregation. Once an inmate agrees to participate in the incentive program, she must abide by rules of good behavior by not yelling or showing disrespect to staff or fellow inmates.

²⁵ See Fred Cohen, *Penal Isolation: Beyond the Seriously Mentally Ill*, Criminal Justice and Behavior Vol. 35, No. 8, 1017-1047 (August 2008) available at <http://cjb.sagepub.com/content/35/8/1017>.

²⁶ See ABA *Criminal Justice Standards on the Legal Treatment of Prisoners*, Standards 23-3.7 and 23-3.8, available at http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publishing/criminal_justice_section, which provide that restrictions relating to a prisoner's programming or other privileges, whether as a disciplinary sanction or otherwise, should not be permitted to eliminate a prisoner's access to exercise, and prisoners in segregated housing should be provided with "meaningful forms of mental, physical, and social stimulation" including out-of-cell time and the opportunity to exercise in the presence of other prisoners. See also *United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners*, Rule 21, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/treatmentprisoners>, which provides: "Every prisoner who is not employed in outdoor work shall have at least one hour of suitable exercise in the open air daily if the weather permits."

²⁷ See Vera Institute of Justice: *Segregation Reduction Project* at <http://www.vera.org/project/segregation-reduction-project> for information on work to reduce the costly and counterproductive use of segregation in Illinois and other states.

Administration reported that the rules of behavior for inmates in the incentive program are fair but also strict.

For an inmate in the incentive program, an administrator meets with her once a month to set individualized short term and long-term goals and incentives. For instance, a short term goal might be set for an inmate to complete a packet of educational worksheets, with the incentive that, upon completion she will be allowed to have an extra phone call or shop at the commissary. A long-term goal might be set for an inmate to work on addressing unhealthy relationships and disruptive behavior issues, with the incentive of seeking a reduction in segregation time.

Administration indicated that for segregation inmates suffering from mental illness, the behavioral rules of the incentive program are more liberal, and reasonable goals and incentives are determined in consultation with a mental health professional. At the time of JHA's visit, administration indicated that one inmate with mental illness was in the incentive program while another had dropped out. The only inmates who cannot seek a reduction in segregation time through the incentive program are those in segregation for committing staff assaults.

JHA supports efforts by Dwight's administration and DOC to reduce segregation and improve the quality of life for segregation inmates. Used prudently and with caution, segregating inmates for short periods can help to protect staff, other inmates, and inmates who intend self-harm, by removing inmates to a controlled setting and preventing situations from escalating.²⁸ As a correctional tool, however, long-term segregation is not only expensive and staff-intensive, its efficacy is questionable in that it tends to induce or exacerbate mental health disturbances, assaultive and antisocial behaviors, and chronic and acute health disorders.²⁹ At Dwight, where the majority of segregation inmates suffers from mental illness and/or is being treated with psychotropic medications, the danger of these inmates deteriorating mentally, physically, and socially under segregation conditions is great.

As demonstrated by states like Ohio and Mississippi, segregation can be safely reduced, without loss of staff positions, and with cost savings, while enhancing a facility's underlying wellbeing and security.³⁰ With respect to Dwight's segregation reduction and incentive program, one drawback that JHA encountered was that several inmates in

²⁸ See Kenneth Adams, Joseph Ferrandino, *Managing Mentally Ill Inmates In Prisons*, Criminal Justice and Behavior (August 2008) Vol. 35, No. 8, 913-927, available at <http://cjb.sagepub.com/content/35/8/913.full.pdf>

²⁹ See Angela Browne, Alissa Cambier, Suzanne Agha, *Sentences During Confinement: Prisons Within Prisons: The Use of Segregation in the United States*, Vera Institute of Justice, 24 Federal Sentencing Reporter 46 (October, 2011).

³⁰ *Ibid*, note 20.

segregation we interviewed were unaware of the program. Formally disseminating information about the incentive program to all segregation inmates through written orientation materials could potentially enhance the program's success and inmate participation levels.

Update: Since our visit, Dwight has made several improvements to the Segregation unit.

- *Dwight now offers its segregation inmates a weekly Diagnostic Behavioral Therapy group, a form of therapy that has been found to be effective in treating "seemingly intractable behavioral disorders[.]"³¹ DOC is looking to import the model being developed at Dwight to other Illinois facilities.*
- *Since JHA's visit, the number of segregation inmates on restricted recreation/yard time has been reduced from eight to three inmates through an incentive program*
- *The Warden has instructed staff to restrict segregation inmates' recreation/yard time only if they commit serious rule infractions during their recreation/yard time.*

###

³¹ Linda Dimeff & Marsha M. Linehan, Dialectical Behavior Therapy in a Nutshell, *The California Psychologist*, 34, 10-13 (2001), available at <http://www.dbtselfhelp.com/DBTinaNutshell.pdf>.

This report was written by Maya Szilak, Director of the Prison Monitoring Project, for the John Howard Association. Maya may be reached at (312) 503-6302 or mszilak@thejha.org.

Contributing to this report were Aviva Futorian, John Howard Association Board President, Alexander Brown, John Howard Association Board Member, and citizen observers: Laurie Jo Reynolds, Juanita Ortiz, Scott Main, Stephanie Tang, and Courtney Widuch.

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.



JHA's work on healthcare in DOC is made possible through a generous grant by the Michael Reese Health Trust.