



John Howard Association of Illinois

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Monitoring Tour of Logan Correctional Center March 2, 2010

Summary: Seriously short of staff, but long on educational and vocational programs.

On March 2, representatives of the John Howard Association conducted a monitoring tour of Logan Correctional Center. They visited a general population housing unit, medical/mental health unit, educational and vocational training facilities and segregation unit. Logan is a medium security male prison.

Logan appears to be a well-run prison with above average educational and vocational programs. But the prison suffers from a serious shortage of staff.

Alex Dawson, Assistant Warden of Programs at Logan, said the prison now has a total staff of 300, of which 196 are correctional officers. To be fully staffed the prison should have another 74 correctional officers, 15 higher-ranking managerial officers and 44 non-security staff, he said.

The staff shortage has been ongoing for years. Six years ago the prison's staff totaled 400.

At the time of the tour, Logan's inmate population was 1,850, close to its maximum capacity, so the drop in number of staff cannot be attributed to fewer people being incarcerated at the facility.

The staff shortages are across the board, Dawson said, ranging from construction tradesmen to mental health professionals.

The shortage is illustrated in Logan's medical and mental health care unit.

The unit is authorized for 12 full-time registered nurses with at least one required to be on premises at all times. But the prison has only five RNs on staff. (Logan does maintain a RN on premises at all times despite the staff shortage.)

One RN said she has been working a minimum of six days a week since last summer.

The workload has increased tremendously and inevitably things are going to happen,” the RN said. She is afraid she will make a mistake in care because of overwork.

The prison is authorized to employ two psychologists to provide care 64 hours a week, but since mid-2006 there has only been one to provide care just 40 hours a week. Similar shortages in mental health care staff were noted this year at two other prisons, Dwight Correctional Center and Pontiac Correctional Center.

Logan is authorized to employ two full-time dental hygienists, but has only one. A health information specialist position has been vacant for nine years.

Logan’s medical staff must on occasion care for seriously or terminally ill inmates who require more personnel than the typical inmate patient.

The shortage of staff is exacerbated by the state legislature’s curtailment of early release programs and a simultaneous crackdown on parole violators early this year. Those factors meant Logan received 400 inmates in a single week in early February, far more than usual.

The deluge of inmates stretched staff to the limit. For example, medical staff were required to examine each incoming inmate for infection with the H1N1 flu virus and isolate any thought to be infected. This added to an already formidable workload of routine duties.

Logan’s medical staff and supervisor said they have been able to maintain good quality of care despite the shortage of personnel. No inmates complained about medical care when interviewed by John Howard representatives.

Dawson said the staff shortage has not compromised employee or inmate health, safety or security nor has it created any threat to the public. But this is only due to extensive and often mandatory overtime required of staff, he said.

The John Howard Association recognizes the financial constraints on the Illinois Department of Corrections. The Association however strongly recommends the state bring Logan closer to full staffing to reduce overtime, avoid employee burnout and limit future problems at the prison.

Educational and Vocational Programs

Logan has an agreement with Richland Community College to provide vocational programs. The college and the prison also offer an array of educational classes and programs designed to aid inmates return to society. In the last fiscal year, educational programs were provided to 1,600 inmates.

Richland offers training in business management, commercial custodial services, computer technology, construction occupations, food services and horticulture. The programs were chosen to match demand in the job market with the employment capability of a broad spectrum of inmates. The training is intended to prepare inmates for entry-level jobs or higher positions upon their release.

Each program has a capacity of 15. There are 200 inmates on a waiting list for vocational training. (All numbers given here fluctuate frequently.)

In the last fiscal year, 276 students participated and 127 received vocational certification. Those who successfully complete a vocational program receive a certificate of proficiency.

Richland offers a job preparation class that is open to any inmate with less than a year remaining to his sentence. Class capacity is 28. There is a computer lab used to enhance job skills. Logan has approximately 200 computers for use in educational or vocational programs.

Richland also offers accredited academic college classes. Inmates who choose to go to college after release may apply the classes towards meeting the requirements of a degree. Richland awarded three Associate Degrees to inmates last year.

“We get a lot of support here,” said Jeffrey Davison, College Coordinator for Correctional Education Programs at Richland.

Davison said he would like to increase the class offerings. He also said he would like to devise a way to track the employment success rate of inmates who earn vocational certification and are released.

Like other prisons, Logan offers GED, Adult Basic Education and rehabilitative classes. A brief summary of those programs may be found in the Education and Rehabilitation Appendix at the end of this report.

In general, no inmate is denied admission to class. Many inmates serve their sentence and are released before completing classes, however. Inmates interviewed were uniformly positive about the quality of the classes. Those in class seemed enthusiastic. Inmates did complain about long waiting lists.

The John Howard Association strongly approves of Logan's approach to educational and vocational training. The partnership between Richland Community College and Logan should serve as template for prisons of all security classifications throughout the state.

Infrastructure

Logan was an institution for the developmentally disabled before its conversion to a prison in 1977. The prison suffers from a design problem that is probably too expensive to fix.

Logan is configured so that most inmates are housed four to a cell in living units of 124 to 140. To make it easier to control and isolate disturbances, modern prison design typically house no more than 50 to 60 people per living unit with one inmate per cell.

Prison management said that placing four inmates on double bunks in a single cell creates a chronic problem. It increases the likelihood of conflict between inmates and theft of personal belongings.

Reducing the size of living units and the number of individuals per cell may be impractical in light of the state's financial crisis. Logan's problematic configuration of cells and living areas does emphasize the need for the prison to be fully staffed.

The prison also has a widespread maintenance problem. The roofs of most buildings at Logan need to be replaced immediately.

Raccoons and other animals routinely damage roofs to enter attics. Shingles are curling or absent. Some attic ventilation is improperly installed which can lead to moisture accumulating in a building. The roofing is dark in color, which makes the housing units hotter in the summer than they would be with light-colored roofing.

Inmates can take on some maintenance tasks, but for obvious reasons most jobs must be handled by staff. During the tour inmates were observed assisting a union carpenter repair holes in a damaged roof. Such repairs can be seen everywhere at Logan.

Prison management said there are plans for a multi-million dollar replacement of roofs over the next several years. Roof replacement should be completed as soon as possible to avoid irreparable structural damage to buildings.

Other than the roof problem, Logan's physical plant appears worn but functional. Some living areas and cells need to be painted. No obvious threats to health and safety were observed and in general the prison was clean and orderly.

Other Facts and Observations

The average inmate is 35 years old and stays at Logan for one year.

There are 127 inmates receiving psychotropic medication, none involuntarily.

A residential drug treatment program treats 50 to 60 inmates at a time and has a three-month waiting list. The most common substance of abuse is alcohol.

There are no programs for sex offenders.

Approximately 20 inmates work to repair and refinish furniture used by not-for-profit organizations.

A review of commissary prices showed them to be in line with ordinary retail prices or cheaper. A toothbrush is 54 cents, for example, and a chess set is \$6.21.

Education and Rehabilitation Appendix

Following is a summary of some of the educational and rehabilitative programs at Logan.

- § The prison has a special educational program for younger inmates that utilizes the computer lab as well as traditional classes.
- § Twenty inmates are enrolled in an Anger Management program and another 63 are on the waiting list.
- § Last year 87 inmates earned GED certification from a pool of 111 students who took the test. This is a 78 percent pass rate.
- § Richland provides 12 instructors. Many of its educational services are provided at no cost.
- § Currently 104 inmates are enrolled in Adult Basic Education classes with another 30 on a waiting list.
- § The average monthly class enrollment is approximately 400.