



Belmont Correctional Institution Follow-Up

October 24, 2011

CIIC Staff

**CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION INSPECTION COMMITTEE REPORT
ON THE INSPECTION AND EVALUATION OF
BELMONT CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION**

Date of Inspection: October 24, 2011

Type of Inspection: Announced

CIIC Member and Staff Present: Joanna Saul, CIIC Director
Darin Furderer, Inspector
Jamie Hooks, Inspector
Carol Robison, Inspector

Facility Staff Present: Michele Miller, Warden
Tim McConahay, Deputy Warden
Terry Chatman, Deputy Warden

CIIC spoke with many additional staff throughout the course of the inspection.

Areas/Activities Included in the Inspection:

Housing Units: 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 House
Education Staff Focus Group
Education Program Observation
Staff Interviews

Inspection Summary:

Overall, Belmont Correctional Institution has made tremendous improvement since the biennial inspection. Staff relayed ongoing initiatives by the Warden and executive staff, including multiple roundtable discussions with staff and town hall meetings with inmates, to brainstorm ideas for improvement: those initiatives have paid off. All but one of the identified critical concerns from the biennial inspection were determined to be resolved or improved; even the one concern that remains – inmate idleness and lack of programs – has shown some improvement due to executive staff initiatives to increase accountability for unit staff and create new programs. The bathrooms in particular showed remarkable improvement: at the time of the biennial inspection, the CIIC inspection team considered the bathrooms to be some of the worst that they had seen, whereas they improved to the point that they were among the best at the time of the follow-up inspection. CIIC commends all staff at Belmont Correctional Institution for the energy that they have poured into institutional improvement – they have made a real difference that will benefit both inmates and staff.

STAFF ACCOUNTABILITY

CIIC CONCERN

- According to the interviews, there is a failure of staff accountability at every level, including officers not enforcing rules for inmates, and supervisors not then holding those officers responsible, and upward the chain of command. Staff relayed that unit management has broken down, with Case Managers and Unit Managers not holding programs and not being held accountable. Staff also relayed that discipline is unfairly administered – the words “fair, firm, and consistent” were said multiple times in terms of the change that needs to occur at the institution. The level of concern conveyed by staff regarding the lack of staff accountability cannot be overstated.

BECI ACTION PLAN

- Brainstorming sessions for executive staff, supervisors, department heads, and union leaders to identify deficiencies, give direction, and also identify what staff are doing well. The institutional inspector is currently tracking all offenders Informal Complaint Resolutions (ICR). She notifies the executive staff member (supervisor) responsible if one of their employees receives repeated, questionable, or contains certain content, so they are aware of possible lack of accountability. She has a tracking system so BECI supervisors can easily monitor the ICR process and ensure employees are being fair, firm and consistent.

CIIC FOLLOW-UP

- CIIC Determination: **IMPROVED**
- Individual staff interviews were again conducted of 13 executive and line staff. Only two staff independently mentioned staff accountability. When directly asked, most staff relayed that the Warden had made strides toward increased accountability and that the new Acting Unit Management Administrator has done an excellent job of improving accountability for unit staff.
- The CIIC inspection team checked the sign-in log at each inspected housing unit to ensure that staff were appropriately performing rounds.

STAFF/INMATE INTERACTIONS

CIIC CONCERN

- Inmates in various housing units relayed that staff treat them with disrespect and address them using inappropriate language. The complaints concerned both staff working in the housing units and certain individuals on the medical staff. Multiple inmates relayed that staff could benefit from additional training on communication and verbal strategies to enhance their people skills.
- Related, many inmates relayed issues regarding the crash-gates outside of their dorms. There is a schedule in place whereby the crash-gates are to remain open for five minute intervals at various times throughout the day, but inmates relayed that this schedule is not followed. Inmates stated that during third shift, staff refuse to let them out to use the restroom, resulting in inmates having to use trash cans and bottles to relieve themselves.

BECI ACTION PLAN

- A lesson plan was developed to address the concern with how employees communicate and treat offenders. The training will emphasize the fact that it is everybody's responsibility to treat others with respect, professionalism, and enhanced cultural awareness. The training will also address the difference in the "old convict" (that we currently have) vs. the "young/short timer." The training will be given to each BeCI employee during in-service and will give the employees time for discussion. The lesson plan will be administered by a mixture of the warden, deputies, AA, BA3, a shift supervisor and an OCSEA member so all perspectives will be heard.
- BeCI post orders clearly state that the crash gates will be locked at count times and opened when we have a clear dormitory count so that offenders can utilize the restroom.
- Rotating of the crash gates on 3rd shift has restricted the large scale movements of inmates, which has resulted in a reduction of large scale fighting, thefts, inmates being out of place, and helped the officers better manage the inmate population.

CIIC FOLLOW-UP

- **CIIC Determination: IMPROVED**
- During the inmate interviews, staff disrespect was independently noted by eight inmates (20%). CIIC staff perceived this as a notable improvement from the prior inspection.
- Medical staff: Staff relayed that a full-time physician and two nurse practitioners were added to the staff. According to staff, the number of informal complaints regarding unprofessional conduct by medical staff has significantly dropped and that the current backlog for all medical appointments is zero.
- Crash-gates: Inmates relayed that there has been improvement in terms of staff following the schedule; however, inmates in 6 House relayed that they still have difficulties using the bathroom at night and therefore they keep jugs by their bunks to relieve themselves. Two inmates in 2 House also relayed that staff would use the crash-gates as group punishment, refusing to unlock the gate if one inmate was disruptive.

STAFFING

CIIC CONCERN

- Staff are wearing multiple hats and are stretched thin. While this is true at almost every DRC facility due to budget cuts, the high level of fatigue and frustration currently felt by staff was palpable. Staff relayed that the Deputy Warden of Operations and Unit Management Administrator positions are currently vacant. The thought occurs that the lack of these upper level management positions could well be related to the above-mentioned concern regarding a lack of staff accountability.

BECI ACTION PLAN

- BeCI recently received offenders from RCC and NCCI that have improved the climate at BeCI and we have authored less special incident reports since these offenders have arrived. The area of staffing is continually monitored and we work closely with the Operations Support Center. BeCI refers employees to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and has a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team that meets with numerous employees to guide them with needs and refer them to appropriate assistance.

CIIC FOLLOW-UP

- CIIC Determination: **IMPROVED**
- At the time of the follow-up inspection, the Deputy Warden of Operations position had been filled and the Warden's Assistant was Acting Unit Management Administrator. While staff are still stretched thin, the perceived level of staff fatigue and frustration was noticeably improved.

INMATE SAFETY LEVEL

CIIC CONCERN

•During the inspection CIIC staff interviewed 60 inmates, including inmates in all housing units throughout the facility. In an effort to gauge the facility's level of safety for inmates, all inmates interviewed were asked to rate their perceived level of safety, with ten meaning the inmate felt "very safe" and one meaning the inmate felt "very unsafe." The average level of safety reported by inmates was 5.8. This rating is lower than the inmate ratings of inmate safety at both a Level 3 and a reception facility, and is only 0.1 higher than the inmate ratings of inmate safety at the state's Level 4 facility.

BECI ACTION PLAN

•The mission of ODRC is to provide a safe, secure, humane environment for all offenders, staff and visitors. This mission is taken very seriously and all issues dealing with offender safety are investigated to determine factual evidence and possible disciplinary action for offenders and even staff. BeCI works hard to establish a safe environment and starting 2/14/2011, BeCI received 169 offenders from NCCI and on 3/21/2011 we received 151 from RCC. These offenders did not want to come to BeCI and have been very vocal and have expressed their frustrations with the transfers verbally and in written form. This move has balanced the population at BeCI and the incidents and use of force have reduced since this move. BeCI has an effective security threat group committee and monitors the behavior of these groups. The safety of the offenders and staff is a main priority.

CIIC FOLLOW-UP

•CIIC Determination: **RESOLVED**

- The CIIC inspection team interviewed 40 inmates during the follow-up inspection in 1,2,4,6, and 8 House. The average of the inmate ratings of inmate safety was 7.3, which is a remarkable improvement over the biennial inspection. Both inmates and staff relayed that a change in the inmate population, which occurred only shortly prior to the CIIC biennial inspection in May, has had a stabilizing effect on the inmate population.
- According to staff communication, on September 22, 2011, BeCI was approved for the purchase of additional cameras which will be strategically placed in areas that pose a risk to safety and security.
- Since May 2011, BeCI has transferred or is in the process of transferring 111 offenders for disciplinary reasons.
- BeCI reported a reduction in Use of Force throughout 2011, and especially in comparison to 2010.
- BeCI developed three "Back 2 Basics" committees to determine the areas where violence occurred, "hot spots," reasons for violence and how to decrease the violence.

RESTROOM SANITATION AND MAINTENANCE

CIIC CONCERN

- There were significant maintenance and sanitation issues throughout most of the restrooms in the housing units. There were showers with soap scum issues and unknown reddish-orange stains in the grout. In particular, the restroom in 8 House had a terrible strong odor, stained toilets, and mold in the shower area on both the ceiling and in the grout. Similarly, the restroom in 2 House had the same strong odor, stained toilets, as well as feces on the seat of one of toilets.
- The restroom in 6 House had significant maintenance issues including multiple broken toilets, one urinal and five showers. Staff relayed that maintenance orders have been put in to address these concerns. There were also shower maintenance issues in 4 House, where it was reported that there is not proper water drainage, resulting in the showers flooding.

BECI ACTION PLAN

- The Maintenance Department has been tasked to evaluate and repair all inmate shower areas as appropriate by June 1, 2011. Both power washers at the camp and main compound have been repaired as of May 9th, 2011. These power washers will continue to be used by unit staff and third shift staff for cleaning the shower areas.
- Toilets in 8-house are being cleaned of the urea with acid by the maintenance department. There is only 1 broken toilet in 6-house and it has been removed. There is a new handicap toilet for that area on order.
- Staff will continue to be re-educated on the proper chemicals that can be used to clean the showers to prevent the mildew from occurring. A “Bleach Procedure” will be in place for every unit to ensure staff awareness of how and when they can request bleach for their unit.

CIIC FOLLOW-UP

- CIIC Determination: **RESOLVED**
- The CIIC inspection team inspected the bathrooms in 1, 2, 4, 6, and 8 House. Overall, the bathrooms were markedly improved, with minimal soap scum, recently-cleaned shower ceilings, and completely white grout. Staff have done a tremendous job at improving the conditions of the bathrooms and it is hoped that the high level of cleanliness will be maintained.
- However, it should be noted that each bathroom inspected had at least one broken appliance, with the exception of 4 House.

INMATE IDLENESS

CIIC CONCERN

- Multiple staff relayed that, with the exception of Religious Services, Recovery Services, and Mental Health, almost no programs are actually offered at the institution. Staff said that the institution “looks good on paper” but does not run the programs that are expected for a medium/minimum facility. Staff said that this has led to assaults that do not need to happen, caused by a lack of activities for the inmates.
- Of the 60 inmates interviewed, 35 stated that the lack of activities, including recreation and programming, is a primary concern. They relayed that the excess of idle time, combined with overcrowding in the dorms, leads to disruptive behavior.

BECI ACTION PLAN

- BeCI has a large population and is currently 139% rated capacity. Offender idleness is a challenge and has been a continual challenge. BeCI has a large number of effective programs that do keep a large number of offenders moving toward re-entry.
- BeCI recreation has recently employed two new General Activity Therapists to assist with additional recreation. This would include more activities during the day and more leagues. During 2010, the recreation department had numerous activities scheduled that involved 2,480 offenders throughout the year.
- BeCI food service has established an incentive work location for offenders to assist with idleness and teach food related skills.

CIIC FOLLOW-UP

- CIIC Determination: **CONTINUED CONCERN**
- Of the 40 inmates interviewed, 24 (60 percent) independently relayed concerns regarding the lack of programs, activities, or recreation time, resulting in inmate idleness.
- However, as stated above, staff relayed that the Acting Unit Management Administrator has actively encouraged unit staff to offer programs and has held accountable those who have not complied. The Acting Major and Inspector also relayed that they took the initiative to jointly develop a horticulture program. This level of staff initiative in developing programs is exemplary and should be encouraged for all executive staff. Therefore, CIIC does see improvement, although opportunities for even greater inmate participation are needed, as is the case across the DRC.
- In addition, staff relayed that recent in-service training included a discussion of the "crisis mode" that the institution was in circa 2010 and the "program mode" that is the future of BeCI. CIIC views this as a positive indication of BeCI's forward movement.