

CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION INSPECTION COMMITTEE

ON-SITE VISIT

JULY 16, 2008

LORAIN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

Prepared and Submitted by CIIC Staff

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**CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION INSPECTION COMMITTEE
REPORT ON
ON-SITE VISIT**

LORAIN CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

ON-SITE VISIT PROFILE

<i>Date of On-site Visit</i>	July 16, 2008
<i>Type of Visit</i>	Announced
<i>CIIC Staff Present</i>	Carol Robison, CIIC Inspector
<i>Institutional Staff Present</i>	Marc Houk, Warden

INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

The Lorain Correctional Institution serves the DRC correctional system as the Northern Reception Center. Inmates serving a sentence of 90 days or less remain at the Lorain facility to complete their incarceration. Inmates with sentences longer than 90 days are processed through the Lorain facility and then housed in their assigned institution.

Due to the close proximity of Lorain Correctional Institution and the Grafton Correctional Institution, the two institutions share certain services in an effort to defray costs and improve efficiency. Among the shared services are warehousing of supplies, recreation administration, personnel administration, and a pre-release office.

The Short Term Offender unit can house up to 124 inmates. A daily average of 118 inmates reside on the short term offender unit.

Inmates at Lorain Correctional Institution spend most of their time in programming, but are still given job assignments. Program content at Lorain Correctional Institution is the same as content within other DRC programs. However, the courses at Lorain are condensed. The range of program subjects includes a fast-track GED, substance abuse, anger management, family skills, and life skills, among others.

The dominant program at Lorain Correctional Institution is the Short Term Offender (STO) Program, which was started in April 2007 and is pre-release oriented. Inmates go from reception directly into their programming without delay. The STO program includes both work and education components. Work concepts are stressed and inmates are placed in either pre-GED or GED academic tracks for the educational component. The inmates reportedly get excited about participating in the STO program. The program

incorporates incentives and rewards, such as enhanced visitations, especially with their children. Incentives and rewards help to motivate inmates in making compliant choices.

It was relayed that the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper has taken an interest in the programming at Lorain Correctional Institution and will be providing a three-month series, later in 2008. The series will reportedly follow an inmate out of prison and ‘to the streets.’

Short Term Offender Programming (STO)

At the core of the short term offender programming are skills to enable an inmate to survive outside prison once released. For example, inmates are taught skills and steps for establishing and maintaining sobriety. In addition, the program imparts knowledge, like where to locate help once the inmate is no longer incarcerated. Personal readiness is an important cornerstone to any success that may be experienced. In the STO program, inmates are taught numerous life skills like self-denial and how not to point blame at others.

The STO program prompts some application of ‘lessons’ and skills at a personal level. Each inmate is encouraged to become aware of their capacity to make choices, develop an awareness of their life as it was prior to incarceration, a knowledge of their current condition, and a definition of the life as they truly want it to be after incarceration.

Institutional Morale

The institutional culture at the Lorain Correctional Institution was described as acceptable, yet there is effort being made to improve staff morale, in light of the DRC’s recent reorganization and institutional job losses due to budget reductions. The Warden has made efforts to add a positive component to the cultural climate through events such as a recent baseball game between the staff members of the Grafton and the Lorain institutions. The Lorain Warden makes conscientious effort to communicate directly with staff in person whenever possible.

ON-SITE VISIT

Entrance and Introduction

The entrance process to Lorain Correctional Institution was efficient and without any irregularities. Staff were cordial and professional. The Lorain Correctional Institution Warden, Marc Houk, met the CIIC Inspector at the sally port. It was decided that several inmates would be available to meet in a round-table discussion with the CIIC Inspector to discuss the institution’s Short Term Offender (STO) program and to relay any other topics of inmate interest to the CIIC Inspector.

After a brief introduction in the Warden’s office, the CIIC Inspector and Warden proceeded to walk to one of the inmate dorms.

Unit Observations

It was observed that some inmates were relaxing on the unit between work assignments (jobs) or school assignments.

The inmate population on the date of the on-site visit was 1,677 inmates. Inmates are housed in cells of single construction; however, all cells are double bunked. Within each cell is a porcelain sink and toilet. Each cell has one desk, a chair, and a four-drawer unit with a cavity on the top half where clothes may be hung on hangers. Each inmate is issued a 2.4 cubic foot trunk for personal items.

Telephone service to inmates is accommodated through four telephones in the open living areas (day room) of the housing units.

INMATE COMMENTS: ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION HELD WITH STO INMATES

The on-site visit included a lengthy round-table discussion with four inmates. During the discussion, inmates raised a variety of issues, as presented in the following paragraphs.

Inmate Life/Housing/Programming

Inmates relayed that they are reasonably satisfied with their housing arrangements. One inmate relayed that on one occasion there was an unfair staff response to a rule violation involving property damage to the unit. Reportedly, an entire unit was being denied recreation due to a window being broken by one inmate, even though the inmate admitted to the violation. It was noted that the cadre inmates routinely were given more outdoor recreation than other inmates.

The Warden indicated that the current television service for inmates will be impacted in February 2009 when transmission will become digital instead of analog. Antennas will become obsolete and cable transmission will be the norm for receiving television networks. The Lorain Warden indicated that there is an effort underway for television service to be provided across the state in the DRC institutions through a statewide contract with a service provider. The Lorain Warden indicated that in previous years there were televisions within each inmate's cell, but now a television is provided in the dayroom. The Warden indicated that he is considering installing a very large flat-screen television monitor in the unit dayrooms, with "dial-in" headphones or earbuds and speakers within each inmate's cell, allowing for each inmate to have volume control of specific programming that may be provided en masse on the units. A prior television viewing room would become a programming room within each unit.

When asked what amenities would make the living unit more pleasant and/or appealing, inmates replied that they would appreciate fans or air conditioning, more recreation or down time, a pool table or game table, and clip lamps so that they could read at night without bothering their cellie.

Inmates indicated that unit staff are good, although there have been some problems with work/job schedules overlapping with scheduled programming. With some flexibility in scheduling, these concerns have been resolved.

Relevant to programming, one inmate indicated that he did not score high enough for a pre-GED course, so he was not able to gain admittance to that program at the Lorain institution, leaving him without any notable programming to prepare him for a future.

Inmates relayed that medical care is good, and they had no complaints.

Regarding commissary, the inmates indicated that the Warden had stopped providing bulk tobacco. The smoke-free policy was being challenged because inmates would roll-up self-made cigarettes using bulk tobacco. The Warden inquired about the inmates' opinion of having an option to purchase an underwear pack through the commissary. Two inmates appeared to affirm the idea, while the other two inmates appeared noncommittal.

The inmates relayed they appreciate 'family visiting nights' that are provided in the visiting room. These evening events last for two to three hours. The events include a meal for the family and the inmate and some form of arts and crafts and board games.

One of the four inmates in particular engaged in significant dialogue addressing what it takes to make behavioral changes in one's life, particularly stopping an addiction. The comments the inmate made were affirmed by two of the others inmates, while the fourth inmate remained quiet. The inmate summarized by saying that sometimes it takes a devastating incident or crisis moment to cause a person to 'let go' of something that has a grip on them. Maturity and the presence of positive role models are essential, but ultimately, it takes self-motivation, commitment, determination, and a strong personal choice to abandon poor choices and decisions of the past.

ADMINISTRATIVE MEETING SUMMARY

The Warden of the Lorain Correctional Institution and the CIIC Inspector held a brief exit meeting following the time spent on the unit and with the inmates.

As noted, the Lorain Correctional Institution is unique in that it houses inmates with sentence lengths of 90 days or less, and the programming is condensed and compacted. The Lorain Warden provided a copy of a proposal to restructure the release preparation workshops and training components that are provided to the inmates. A table displaying the components proposed for the restructured program is provided on the following page.

TABLE 1: Proposal to Restructure Release Preparation			
Current Release Preparation Workshops	Proposed Replacement	Staff Responsible	Inmates Served Through the Program or Service
Employment Readiness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal Setting • Work History • Resumes/Applications • Job Search • Interviewing • Job Retention 	Career Enhancement Program – Employment Domain	Education	Inmates with an employment need identified on their RAP would be directed to the program. Inmates without an employment need would also be permitted to participate in the classes.
Community Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Security, Birth Certificate, and Temporary Identification • Voting Rights • Ohio Job and Family Services • Community Justice ABLÉ Centers • Driver’s license and traffic laws • Expungement • Other community agencies and services 	Essential Habilitation Service	Unit Mgmt.	Provided to all inmates prior to release.
Mental Health Workshops	Essential Habilitation Service	ODMH – Community Social Worker	Provided to all offenders on the mental health caseload through discharge planning.
Medical Services Workshops	Essential Services Workshops	Medical	Provided to all offenders being provided with medical services as a part of medical care.
Recovery Services	Substance Abuse Program	AOD	Provided to inmates based on need, as identified on the RAP.
Adult Parole Authority Workshop	Community Functioning	Reentry Coordinator	Provided to all offenders leaving under supervision.
Community Justice Workshop	Essential Habilitation Service	Various Staff	Mandatory for all offenders if not previously completed during incarceration.
Employee Videoconference	Offender Workforce Development	Job Coordinator	Made available to all eligible offenders.
Annual Institution Job Fair	Employment	Reentry Coordinator	Made available to all eligible offenders.
Sharing Career Opportunities and Training Information (SCOTI)	Essential Habilitation Service	Library Staff	Made available to all offenders on computers in all inmate libraries.
Faith Based Resource Programs	Institution Programs	Chaplain	Made available to all offenders throughout their incarceration.