



Circleville
Juvenile
Correctional
Facility
Interim
Inspection

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SECTION I. INTERIM INSPECTION OVERVIEW

CIIC Inspector Jamie Hooks conducted an interim inspection of Circleville Juvenile Correctional Facility (Circleville JCF) on October 27, 2011. The purpose of the visit was to interview a cross section of youth throughout the facility regarding various subjects, including safety, programming, and education.

SECTION II. KEY FINDINGS

- **New leadership.** Ronald Edwards was named as the new Superintendent of Circleville JCF and officially assumed duties at the facility on October 11, 2011. Throughout the interim inspection, unprompted, youth were very approving of Superintendent Edwards. In particular, youth relayed appreciation for his visibility on campus, accessibility, and how comfortable they felt approaching him with any concerns. Youth remarked that Superintendent Edwards is easy to talk to, receptive to youth input, strict (in a positive way), a “man of his word,” that he follows through, that he looks out for youth, and their feeling that he truly wants youth to succeed.

Various staff throughout the inspection also expressed optimism regarding the change in leadership and felt that this change would enhance staff morale on campus.

- **Acts of violence and gang activity.** In recent months Circleville JCF, as well as Scioto JCF, experienced an increase in gang activity and acts of violence. In response to the increase in acts of violence and as a means of stabilizing the facilities, DYS Central Office implemented “Operation Safety First.” The operation consisted of identifying those youth accounting for a substantial number of the acts of violence and moving them to a behavior management unit at Scioto (Unit PROGRESS). An ODRC Special Tactics and Response Team was brought into Scioto and Circleville JCF during the first week of October with the task of transferring the identified group of disruptive youth and to search each facility for contraband.

In the immediate weeks following “Operation Safety First,” Circleville JCF moved to a restricted movement plan to further stabilize and ensure safety at the facility. Circleville JCF administration relayed that the number of acts of violence for October 2011 (through the third week) were significantly lower than in recent months and would likely be the lowest monthly total of any month in 2011. At the time of the inspection, the facility was no longer operating under restricted movement.

Each youth interviewed during the interim inspection was asked to rate his level of safety at the facility and all youth, with the exception of one, stated that they felt safe. Many youth relayed that they would have rated their safety lower prior to the transfer of the most disruptive youth to Scioto JCF. Several youth discussed their belief that moving the disruptive group of youth to Scioto JCF decreased gang presence and calmed the facility’s atmosphere. However, a majority of youth interviewed still felt gangs were a problem at the facility and that, in time, new gang “leaders” would emerge to replace those transferred.

- **Disruptions in SBBMS.** Several youth relayed recent issues concerning SBBMS and a disruption in its delivery at the facility. Youth and staff relayed that there were issues of youth “taxing” (i.e. extorting) other youth for items purchased with SBBMS points. In addition, staff relayed that several youth phase levels were inaccurately recorded, which resulted in youth receiving a higher phase level and increased privileges for a phase not yet earned. In response, it is CIIC’s understanding that staff performed searches to confiscate SBBMS related items and that some youth phase levels were lowered if the items or levels were not legitimately earned. It was relayed that SBBMS is now operating normally throughout the facility.
- **Facility staff.** Most of the youth interviewed were complimentary of staff at the facility, particularly in reference to their unit staff and teachers. For the most part, youth felt unit staff were helpful, fair, and caring. Several youth also commented that they appreciate the willingness of teachers to provide a balance between using the A+ computer program and offering traditional book instruction. Youth said they have noticed an increase in book instruction offered during the last quarter of school.