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Ohio River  
Valley  
Juvenile  
Correctional  
Facility  
Interim  
Inspection

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March 29, 2011

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## SECTION I. INTERIM INSPECTION OVERVIEW

CIIC staff conducted an interim inspection of Ohio River Valley JCF on March 29, 2011. The primary focus of the interim inspection was to speak with youth and staff regarding any concerns, particularly surrounding the recent announcement that Ohio River Valley JCF will close on September 10, 2011.

## SECTION II. KEY FINDINGS

### A. Points of Pride

- **Staff camaraderie and support.** A high level of support amongst staff was readily apparent during the inspection. Employees described the group as a family unit. They stated that the closure announcement has brought them closer together. Examples were given of staff sharing employment opportunities with the rest of staff, even though it would increase competition for the position.

Ohio River Valley JCF administration is handling the closure with poise. They are very attentive to the needs of staff, while still monitoring the facility to ensure that youth needs are met. For example, administration stated that they will be as flexible as possible to accommodate any staff member that needs to change shifts to pursue an employment opportunity.

- **Proactive efforts in the education department.** Education staff relayed that they have organized a “What’s Next Committee” made up of experienced Ohio River Valley JCF education staff. The purpose of the Committee is to assist fellow education staff with job searches, resume building, and to offer general support to keep morale high. Staff relayed that the education department is celebrating every employee that finds a job and encouraging staff to share any job openings they discover.
- **Facility Cleanliness.** All areas of the facility viewed by CIIC staff during the inspection were in good condition and free of sanitation issues.
- **Safety Level of Youth and Staff.** The average level of safety reported by youth was 7.2, with ten as “very safe” and zero as “very unsafe.” Most youth that rated their level of safety below ten but at least a five, explained that it was because they are at a close security facility and therefore it could never be a ten, but that they had no immediate threats to their safety. Staff interviewed rated the staff level of safety higher than youth, with an average of 8.4.

### B. CIIC Concerns

- **Lack of communication to line staff.** Almost all staff CIIC spoke with during the inspection relayed a lack of understanding and answers to questions regarding their future, regardless of whether they would remain with the Department or seek

employment elsewhere. Staff requested that individuals from Central Office come to the facility regularly to explain each step of the closure process. In particular, employees stated that they need someone to explain how their benefits will work, such as how taking unemployment benefits will affect pursuing higher education.

Employees also wanted a better explanation as to why Ohio River Valley JCF was the facility chosen for closure and who made the decision. There were many misconceptions and conflicting beliefs on this issue shared by staff during the inspection.

- **Increase in assaults.** In the days following the closure announcement there were approximately ten incidents of youth assaulting staff by throwing bodily fluids, specifically on one of the Special Management Units (SMUs). Youth relayed to staff that they can do whatever they want because the institution is closing. Due to the assaults, a majority of youth in the unit were on the highest level of restriction. Administration relayed that once the closure news settled after a week, so did the assaults. Nonetheless, there was still tension present between youth and staff on the unit during the inspection, even if the assaults have ceased.
- **Youth-staff interactions.** According to several youth, the attitude of staff has substantially changed since the closure announcement. Some youth relayed that although staff are still performing their main duties, they no longer care about the youth. One member of staff stated that “staff have lost their drive and are just going through the motions.” Multiple youth relayed allegations regarding staff threats made since the closure announcement, including physical threats, and a belief that staff intentionally instigate youth so they will be sent to their rooms.

### SECTION III. CIIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Provide additional information to line staff.** DYS Central Office has developed a comprehensive closure plan, with extensive provisions in place to assist exempt and other staff with career development. CIIC recommends that a memorandum be distributed to staff describing the tools available, contact information, and a timeline of dates when individuals and groups will be at the facility to offer assistance. For example, if there is an individual planning to be at the facility to assist staff in drafting resumes, make that date known. Providing this information will lessen any confusion, help staff create a plan, and help staff feel supported by administration.
- **Monitor youth-staff interactions.** Although there are many provisions in place to monitor the safety level of youth and ensure that all programming is delivered during the closure, CIIC recommends that executive staff also regularly speak with youth on a one-on-one basis. This will allow youth to convey any concerns that they may feel uncomfortable sharing directly with their unit staff.

#### **SECTION IV. CIIC ACTION PLAN**

- **Conduct a follow-up interim inspection in August 2011.** CIIC staff scheduled an additional interim inspection of Ohio River Valley JCF in August 2011, prior to the scheduled closure. The purpose of the interim inspection is to ensure that conditions do not significantly deteriorate as the closure date approaches. CIIC staff will again interview youth and staff to gauge their level of safety.
- **Monitor correspondence CIIC receives from Ohio River Valley JCF youth.** CIIC will monitor all correspondence received from Ohio River Valley JCF and follow-up on any serious concerns communicated by youth or staff.
- **Track assaults until the date of closure.** CIIC staff will continue to review the monthly assault data reported by the facility to monitor any unusual increases in assaults or resulting injuries incurred by youth or staff.