

Texas Youth Commission
Response to the Independent Ombudsman
Third Quarter Report, FY 2011

July 29, 2011

The Texas Human Resources Code, Section 64.060, provides that the Office of Independent Ombudsman (OIO) shall accept comments from the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) for OIO quarterly reports. The Code also provides that TYC may not submit comments after the 30th day after the date of the report. TYC received the OIO Third Quarter Report on July 8, 2011.

The Third Quarter Report summarizes OIO activities for March through May 2011, and it contains no recommendations for TYC action. The Report provides a statistical analysis of youth complaints made to OIO staff, including 70% made during OIO facility inspections and the highest number of complaints from youth at the Crockett facility. In response to the Report's statistical analysis, several general comments might be helpful for interpreting significance.

The period reviewed immediately preceded important decisions by the TYC Board on June 3, 2011 to close or restructure certain facilities in response to significant agency budget reductions. Uncertainty about impending decisions may have affected youth perceptions. Similarly, youth perceptions of the significant transitions during the fourth quarter related to closures of the Crockett, Al Price, and Ron Jackson Unit 2 facilities by August 31, 2011 and the consolidation of the Mart Units 1 and 2 into a single facility are likely to be reflected in the OIO's next quarterly report.

Also, when youth have an issue about which they are dissatisfied, they may submit their complaint to multiple systems, including the Office of Inspector General, the TYC Youth Grievance System, and to a TYC Juvenile Correctional Officer, Case Manager, Youth Rights Specialist, facility superintendent or assistant superintendent as well as to OIO staff. All complaints are investigated; without a way to tie OIO complaints to those collected elsewhere, the significance of duplication or quality of responses is difficult to evaluate. Also, youth typically submit complaints on a broad range of issues encompassing minor to very serious concerns. Additionally, they may be dissatisfied with a response that is the correct response, and feel their complaint is unresolved. Finally, the filing of a complaint does not imply that wrongdoing has occurred. Without a corresponding analysis of responses, it is difficult to evaluate the level of seriousness of the complaints included in the Report's statistical analysis.

Monthly discussions between the OIO and TYC executive staff are very helpful to TYC for monitoring the seriousness of youth complaints made directly to OIO, and detailed information may be shared as appropriate to address specific youth concerns. TYC values the complaint process and redundant systems as critical resources for ensuring youth safety and rehabilitation.

The agency appreciates the visibility and availability of OIO staff to youth and TYC staff, and for OIO efforts to gather accurate, detailed, and complete information.