



TEXAS  
JUVENILE JUSTICE  
DEPARTMENT

**Response to the Independent Ombudsman  
First Quarter Report, FY 2016  
January 26, 2016**

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) has received the FY 16 First Quarter Report from the Office of the Independent Ombudsman (OIO). As always, TJJD appreciates the opportunity to respond. The OIO notes in an overview of work by the office that the OIO issued a special report on the Giddings State School in response to an incident occurring at Giddings in late September 2015. The OIO summarized findings in four main points.

- The agency's inability to attract and retain key staff
- Changes to the Phoenix Program causing it to be less effective
- Ineffective control over youth and failure to issue proper consequences
- Lack of Central Office support and responsiveness

The OIO correctly noted that TJJD issued a Management Action Plan (MAP) addressing youth and staff safety in facilities. The OIO special report on Giddings and TJJD Management Action plan were attached to the quarterly report.

TJJD notes that while a number of factors occasionally result in a vacancy of a key position extending beyond a reasonable time frame, the agency remains committed to actively recruiting and working to retain key positions. TJJD is close to completing a two year process to become an Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) site. Once certified by the APA, the agency's ability to recruit postdoctoral interns will increase and with it the attraction to postdoctoral candidates to remain with the agency as they pursue licensure with supervision provided by the agency at no cost. Since beginning the process, the agency has processed more than six interns, with three successfully completing their internships, remaining with the agency and successfully obtaining licensure, going on to fill doctoral positions in the agency. A new class of interns began in September 2015. Additionally, TJJD's human resources department has recently created a tracking system to identify positions that remain vacant over extended periods of time.

While the report mentions a need for the Security Intelligence Officer (SIO) that is employed by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to provide gang prevention and intervention type

services to the facility another staff member at the Giddings facility has been providing those services. The Performance and Accountability Specialist hired through the State Programs and Services Division has extensive gang knowledge and training certifications on gangs. She is acting as the agency liaison on gangs for facilities with the security intelligence officers working with the OIG. She works with the SIOs regarding reporting on trends in gang activity, providing routine reporting together at bi- weekly superintendent calls. Additionally she is providing gang education and training to staff at Giddings, working directly with youth and staff to identify gang related activity and ensure delivery of appropriate consequences and behavior groups.

The report also mentions a lack of filled case manager positions, particularly at the Giddings facility. The agency has made it a priority to make sure these positions are filled and as of January 26, 2016, 23 out of 24 positions are filled at Giddings. You can see the rest of the staffing levels for case managers, social workers, health specialists, psychologists and the Directors of Clinical Psychology below.

Location	Case Managers		Social Workers		Health Specialists		Psychologist		Director of Clinical Psychology	
	Positions	Filled	Positions	Filled	Positions	Filled	Positions	Filled	Positions	Filled
Evins	16	13			3	3			1	1
Gainesville	27	27	1	1	5	5			1	1
Giddings	24	23	4	3	7	7	1	1	1	0
Mart - Long Term	24	21	3	3	3	2			1	1
Mart RTC	12	11			7	5			1	1
Mart - Phoenix	4	3			1	1				
Ron Jackson	31	29	1	1	11	11			1	1

Overall turnover rates for TJJJ employees continue to decrease and are below for your reference.

<b>All TJJJ</b>	
FY 2013	30.30%
FY 2014	30.43%
FY 2015	26.62%
FY 2016 (Projected)	26.38%
<b>JCO Only</b>	
FY 2013	37.94%
FY 2014	36.52%
FY 2015	31.91%
FY 2016 (Projected)	34.00%

The agency has provided extensive training, oversight and support to the Phoenix program. The outcomes for the Phoenix program reflect a significant reduction in instances of aggressive and assaultive behavior for the majority of youth participating in the program. The percentage of youth with reduced aggression rates following Phoenix placement were as follows during recent fiscal years: 80.0% in FY 2013; 84.2% in FY 2014; 83.8% in FY 2015; and 94.1% to date in FY 2016.

In connection with the MAP, the agency has recently put additional focus on ensuring that facilities and their staff effectively use tools already in place to redirect youth, and to provide effective case management and treatment services. Additional emphasis has been placed on the review of determinate sentenced offenders to ensure that youth are provided all appropriately identified treatment needs and that facilities are empowered to make appropriate recommendations for transfer to TDCJ-ID when a youth fails to progress in treatment, education and overall behavior expectations. The timely provision of services, effective monitoring of programs and timely review of youth with appropriate recommendations ensure the youth can make informed choices in his/her own best interest to help achieve program completion and a positive recommendation for parole release. In some cases, youth elect not to do so and in those cases, when criteria for transfer are met, facilities must make recommendations for transfer to TDCJ-ID to ensure a healthy treatment culture for those youth who are willing to actively engage in treatment and take advantage of the education and other services offered by the agency to avoid adult incarceration. The status of these students is being monitored closely by the Office of Sentenced Offender disposition and are reviewed weekly by the executive director and other executive staff.

Central office program staff and executive staff make routine facility visits, speak with staff on site, participate in town hall meetings, and work diligently to include staff from the field in all

significant decisions regarding operations, treatment and programming. Additionally, central office has supported leadership, team building and management training for staff at facilities when appropriate. This has included training from both internal and external sources. The agency actively participates in the Correctional Management Institute's Leadership Training program with the Vera Institute of Justice. Many aspects of the MAP include collaboration with field staff to enhance, develop, and/or maintain improvements in aspects of safety, staffing, culture and improved communications. Good progress towards these goals continues.

TJJD appreciates the opportunity to respond to the OIO and looks forward to sharing updates on these efforts that continue to move the agency effectively forward.