

**Independent Ombudsman
for the
Texas Juvenile Justice Department**



Third Quarter Report FY 24

March 1, 2024 to May 31, 2024

INTRODUCTION

This is the third Quarterly Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 to be submitted by the Office of Independent Ombudsman for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJJ) as per the Texas Human Resources Code, Chapter 261. This report is intended for the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, members of the State Legislature, the TJJJ Governing Board, the TJJJ Executive Director, and the Texas State Auditor. This report will cover the reporting period of March 2024 through May 2024. It should be noted, this is not an all-inclusive report, but rather a summary of significant findings during the reporting period.

STRATEGIC INTENT

The Office of Independent Ombudsman (OIO) was established for the purpose of investigating, evaluating, and securing the rights of children committed to the Juvenile Justice Department, including a child released under supervision before final discharge. Legislation enacted during the 84th Legislative Session (Senate Bill 1630), expanded those duties to include county post-adjudication facilities and contract facilities where county post-adjudicated youth are placed. To fulfill the duties of the office, OIO staff regularly visit all TJJJ secure facilities, halfway houses, parole offices, all county post-adjudication facilities and county contract care programs. Currently, the Office of Independent Ombudsman conducts regular site visits at approximately 150 facilities and probation/parole offices that meet the definition added by Senate Bill 1630, 84th Legislative Session.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During this reporting period, the Office of Independent Ombudsman conducted 94 facility site visits and interviewed 804 youth offenders (Refer to the Annex for a listing of facility site visit locations). During this quarter, the OIO opened three individual cases and closed five. Two individual cases were closed as sustained.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Systemic Issues are recurring findings within a single facility or across multiple facilities occurring over a period of time which substantially interfere with youth rights, or the delivery of services. The Juvenile Justice Department has experienced staffing issues at all five State Secure facilities. This issue has been pervasive for more than 12 consecutive months. This issue is related to several career positions within facilities; however, it is most volatile with Juvenile Correctional Officers. The Juvenile Justice Department has experienced high turnover rates with the inability to recruit, train, and properly staff facilities to keep pace with the demand and maintain industry acceptable staff to youth ratio.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Office of Independent Ombudsman (OIO) is required by statute to promote awareness of the Office and the services provided. This is accomplished through various initiatives. The Ombudsman meets with civic and advocacy groups to discuss issues, trends in juvenile justice and concerns with youth rights. In addition, the Office of Independent Ombudsman maintains a public web page describing the duties of the Office and how the Ombudsman may be contacted, either by phone, mail, or e-mail. In addition, the OIO periodically mails informational brochures regarding services of the OIO to the parents of youth newly committed to TJJJ. In order to facilitate contact from youth in the facilities as well as the public, the OIO maintains a hotline that is answered 24 hours a day. The Deputy Ombudsman distribute posters containing the OIO's hotline number to the facilities that are routinely visited as well as educating youth on complaint procedures.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Accounting of Site Visits, Youth Contact and Individual Cases

	3rd Quarter FY23	2nd Quarter FY24	3rd Quarter FY 24	FY24 Total
TJJD/Contract Site Visits	27	26	27	81
County Post Adjudicated/Contract Facility Site Visits	66	74	67	211
Number of Youth Interviewed	668	737	804	1752
Number of Youth Interviews Conducted	773	842	954	2698
Closed Individual Cases	1	4	5	12

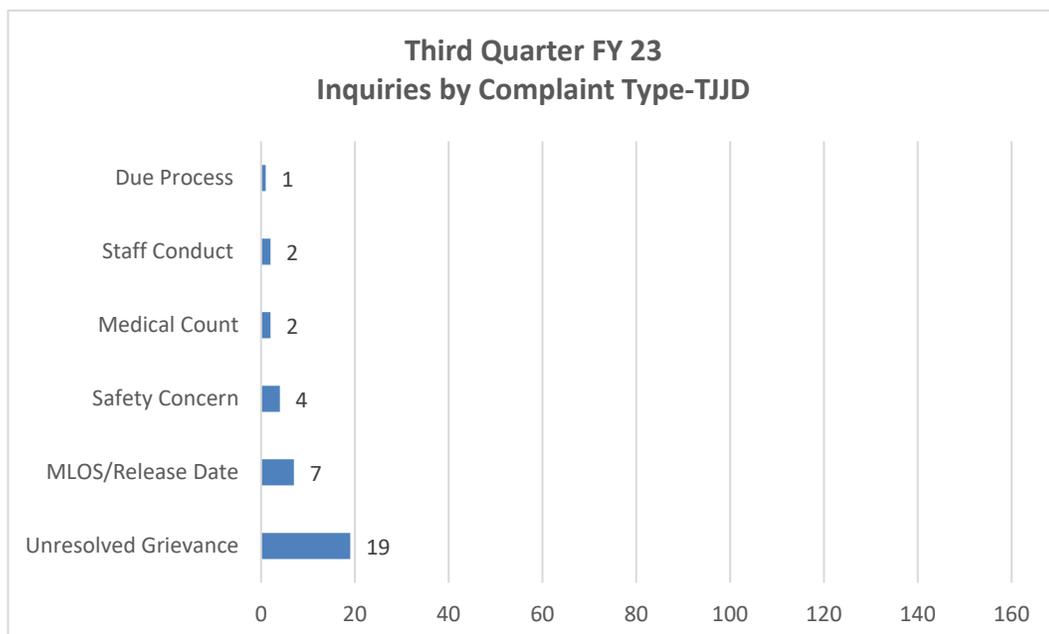
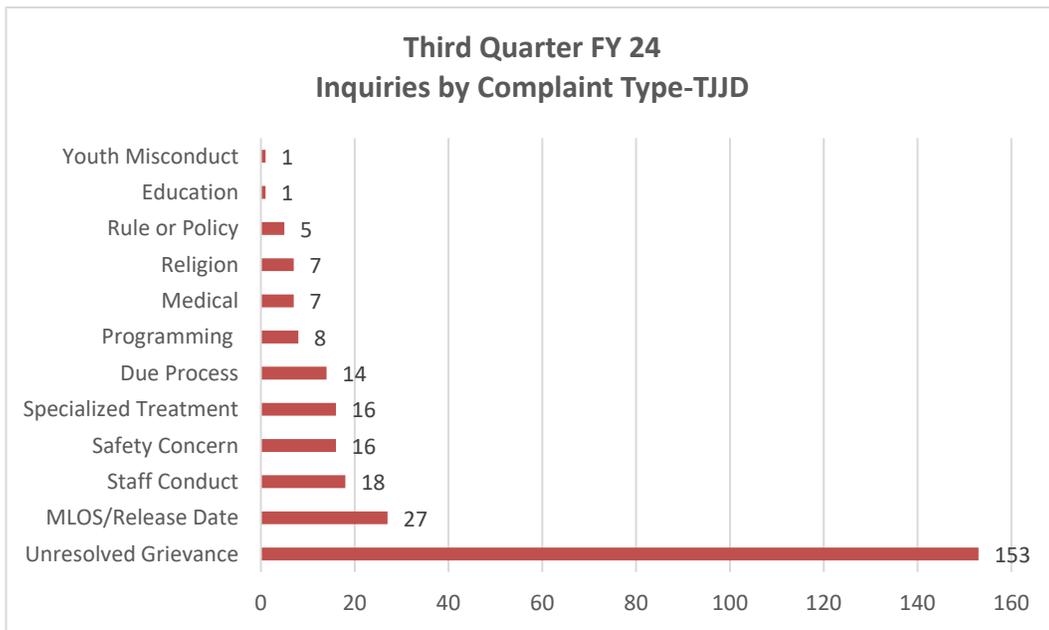
Inquiries

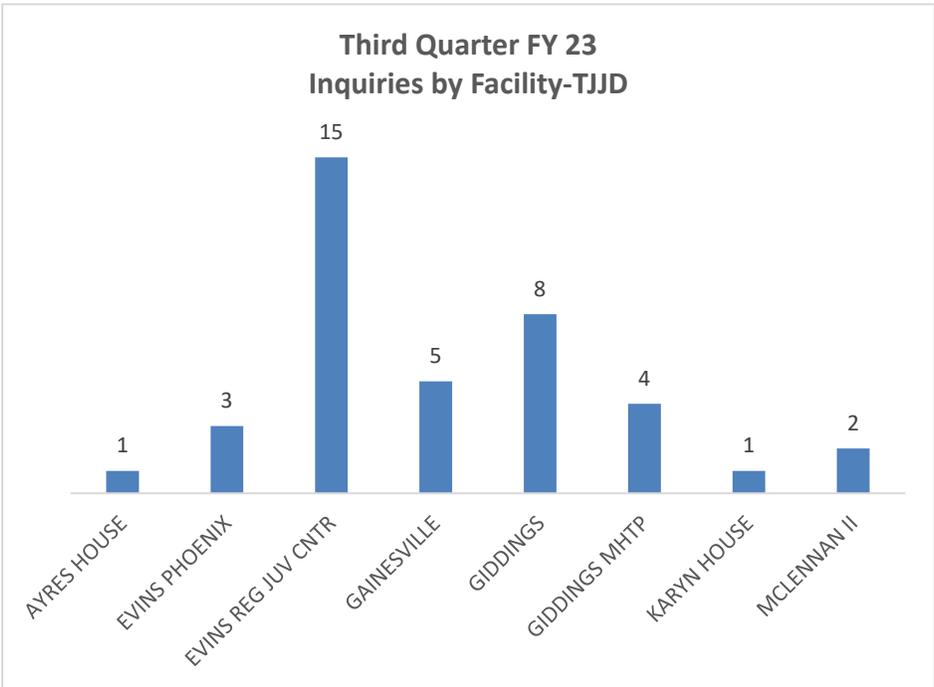
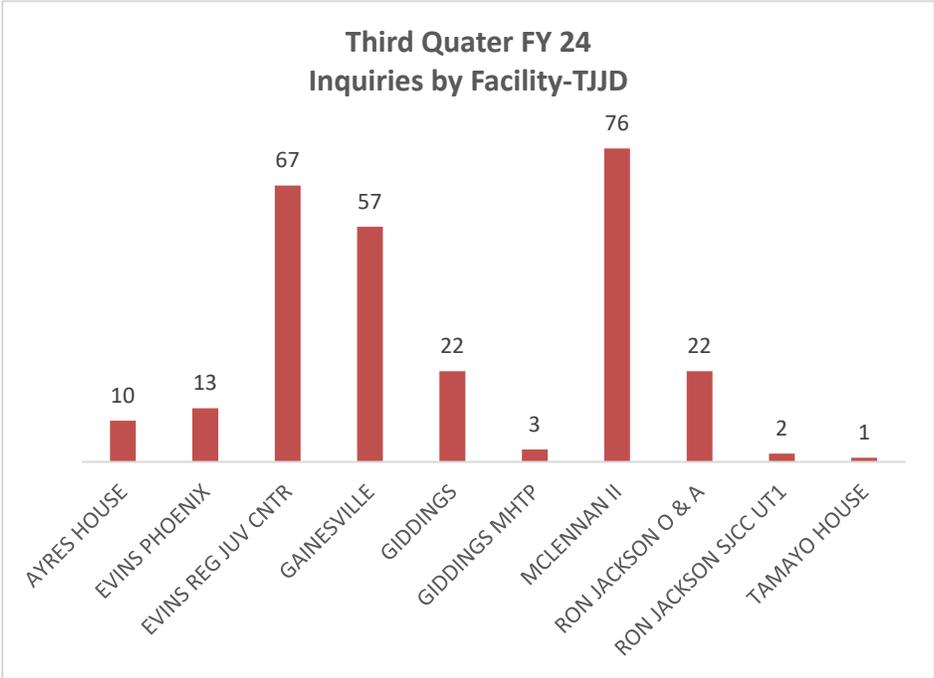
An inquiry is a review of potential youth rights violation(s) conducted by the OIO. All inquiries are thoroughly reviewed and may include interviews of involved youth and staff, review of relevant paperwork, and video review. The OIO obtains information related to potential youth rights violations utilizing interviews, video review, documentation review, and consultation with other entities or divisions.

The OIO received 347 complaints during the third quarter of FY 24, 335 related to TJJD and 12 related to county post-adjudicated facilities. When compared to the third quarter of FY 23, this represents an increase of 128%.

Inquiries TJJD

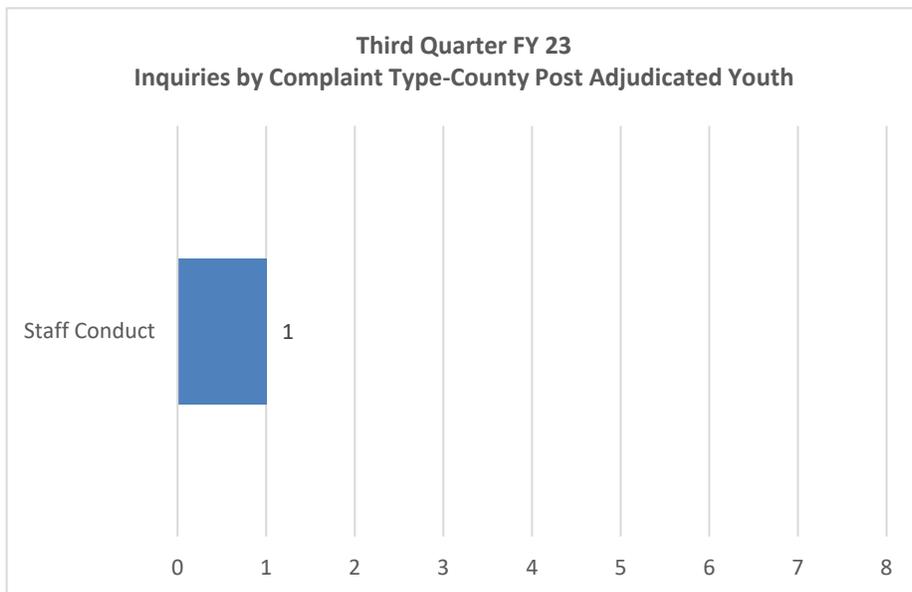
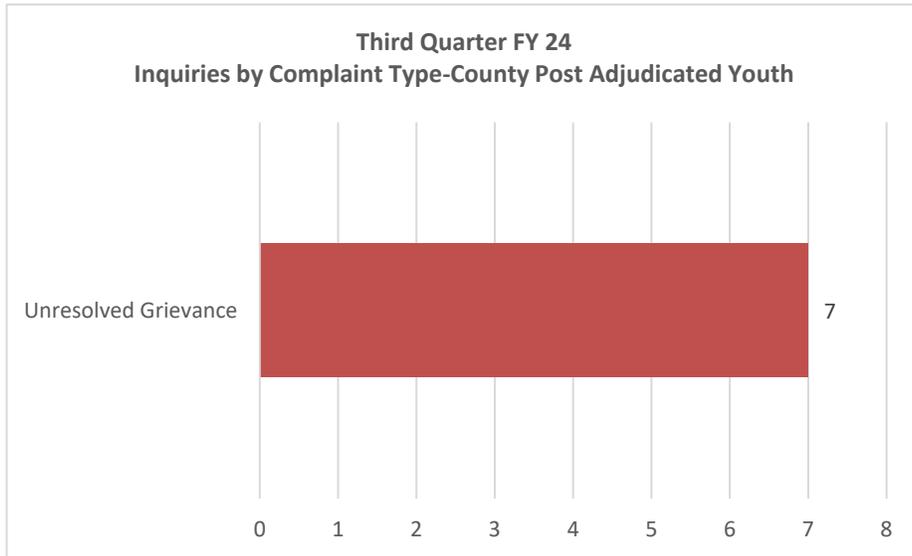
Of the 347 complaints received during the third quarter, 273 were Inquiries related to TJJD youth.





Inquiries-County

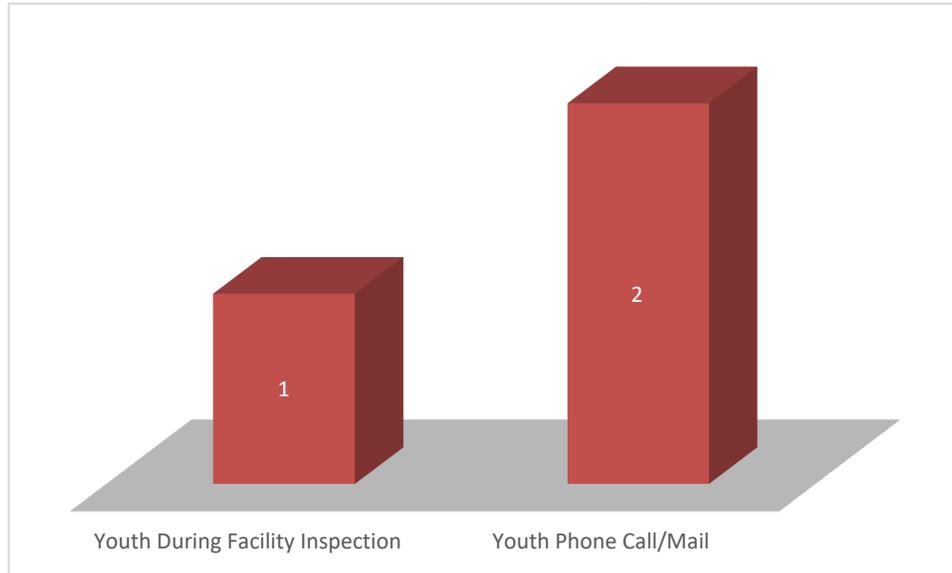
Of the 347 complaints received during the third quarter of FY 24, seven were Inquiries related to County post-adjudicated youth



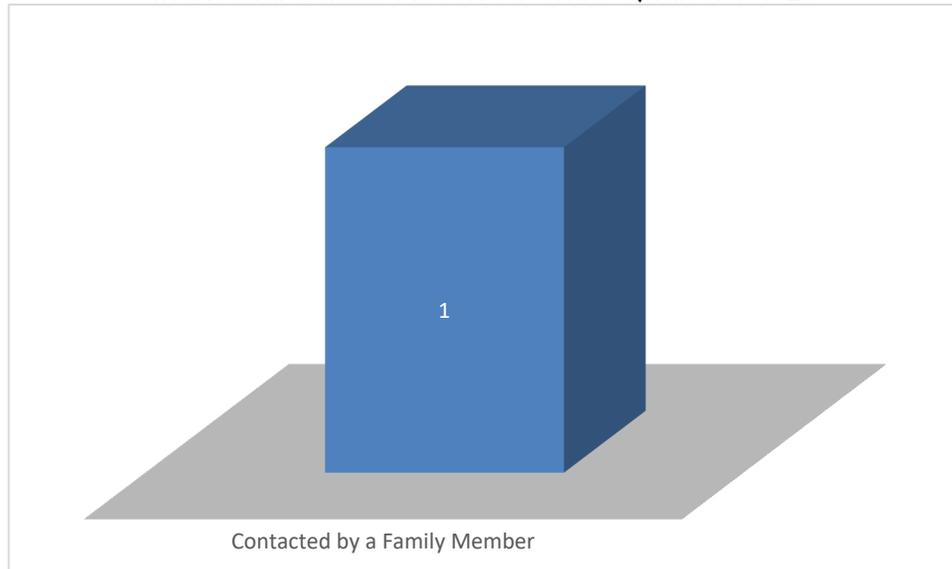
Individual Cases

Inquiries involving serious issues related to youth rights may be opened as an Individual Case, which entails an in-depth review and investigation of the issues. During the third quarter of FY 24, the OIO opened three complaints as individual cases, all involved TJJD youth. This is an increase of 200% from the third quarter of FY 23.

Individual Cases Received-Third Quarter FY 24



Individual Cases Received-Third Quarter FY 23



Individual Cases by Facility-Third Quarter FY 24

	Total for Facility	Due Process	Religion	Safety Concern
TJJD/Contract Facilities				
Gainesville State School	1	1	0	0
McLennan County SJCF	2	0	1	1

Individual Cases by Facility-Third Quarter FY 23

	Total for Facility	Safety Concern
TJJD/Contract Facilities		
Evins RJC	1	1

Closed Individual Cases

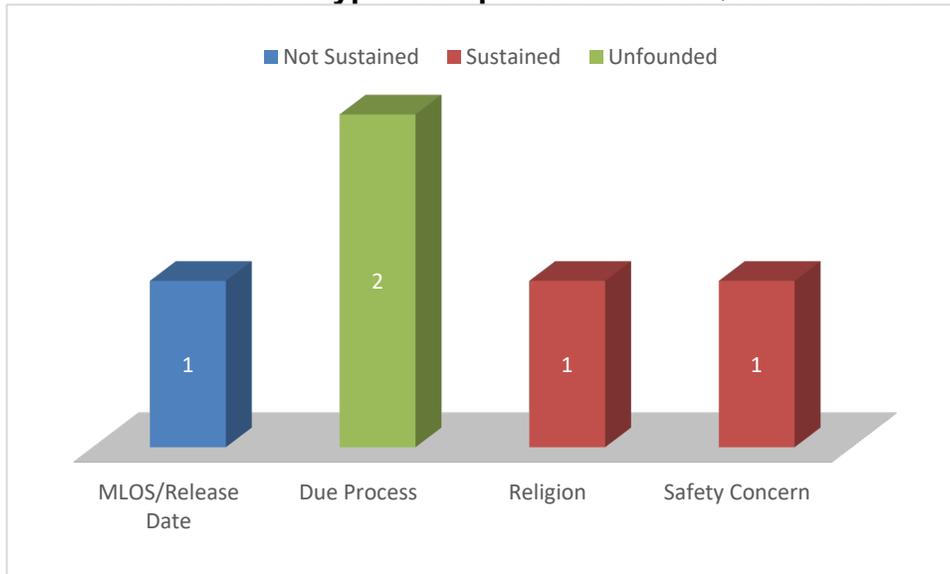
The OIO closed five individual cases during the third quarter of FY 24, all involved TJJD youth.

Sustained-There is sufficient corroborated information to warrant noting and a follow-up response/action plan from the facility.

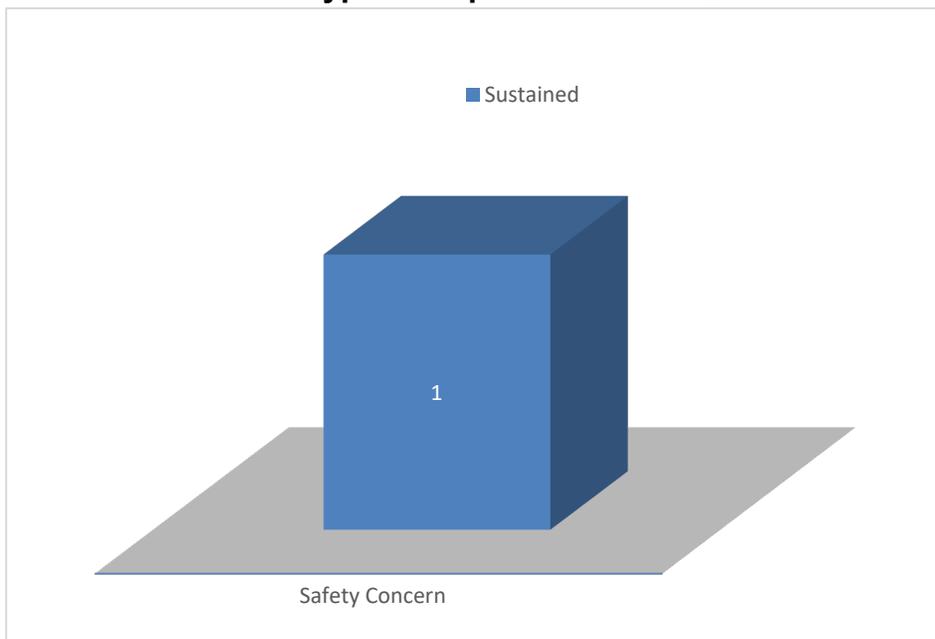
Not Sustained-There is insufficient information or evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.

Unfounded-The complaint is without merit or is within applicable law or policy.

Individual Case Type & Disposition-Third Quarter FY 24



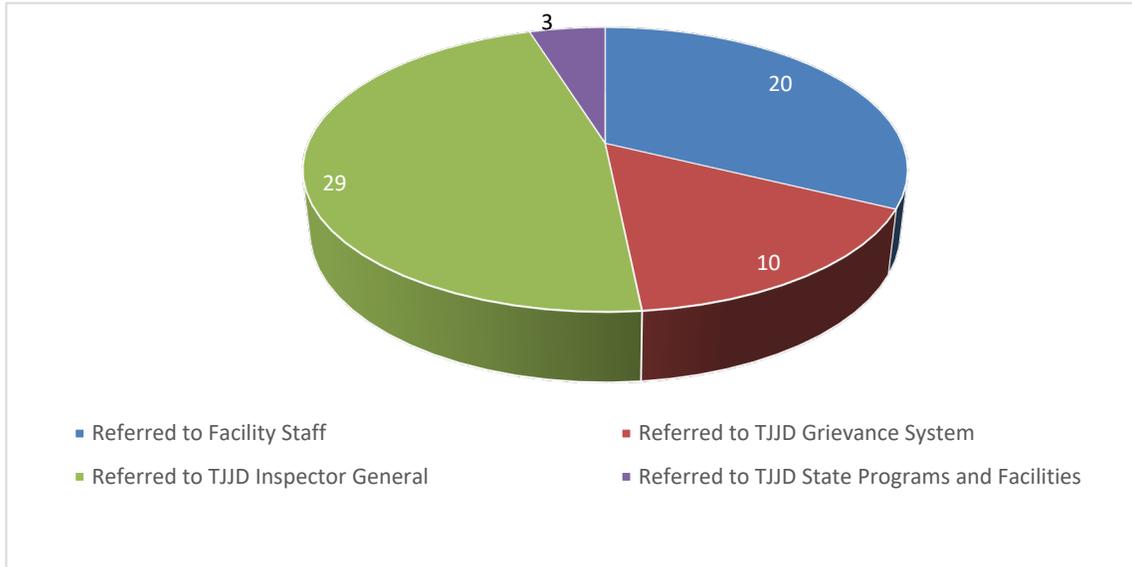
Individual Case Type & Disposition-Third Quarter FY 23



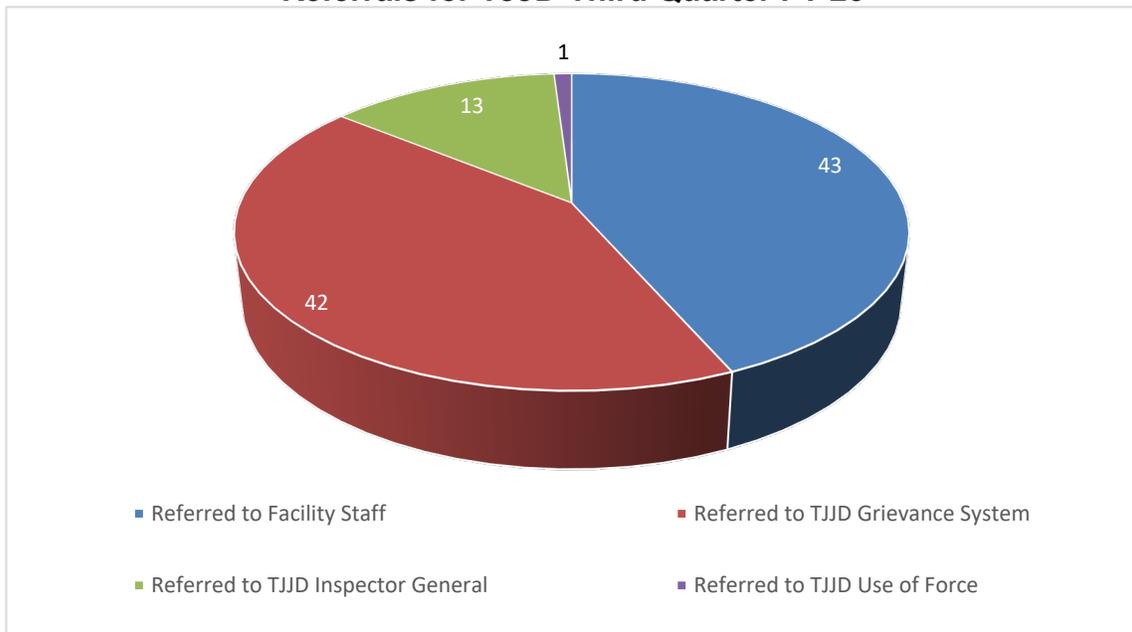
Referrals

The OIO receives numerous inquiries and complaints that upon review are either outside the scope of the OIO, a matter that should be addressed by facility staff or grievance process, or would be better addressed by another agency or group. During the third quarter of FY 24, the OIO received 67 referrals. This is a decrease of 39.6% from the third quarter of FY 23.

Referrals for TJJJ-Third Quarter FY 24



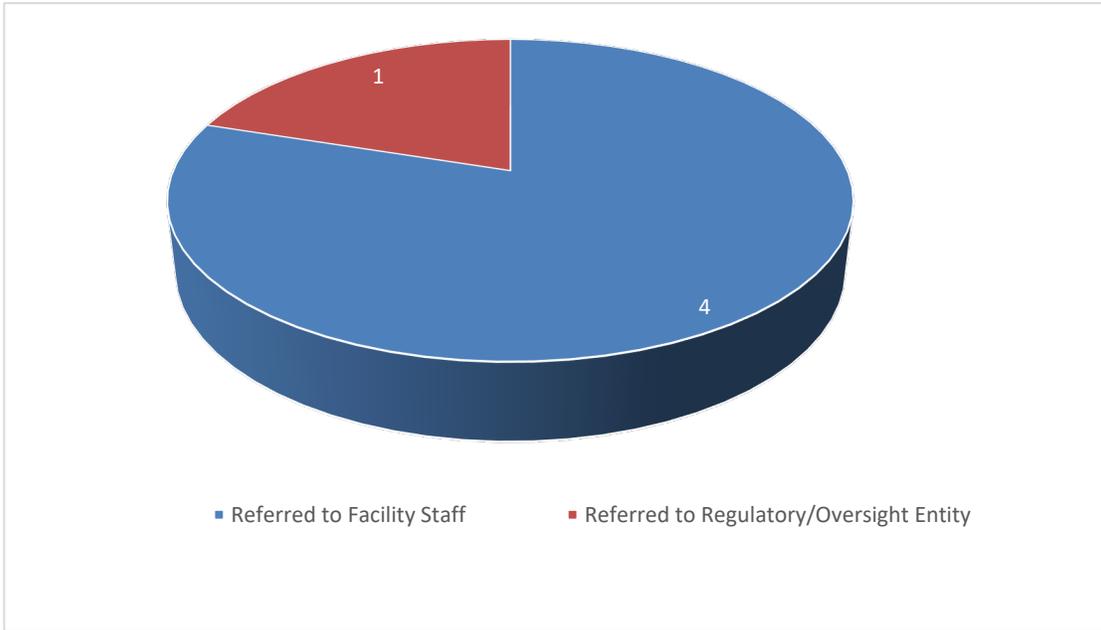
Referrals for TJJJ-Third Quarter FY 23



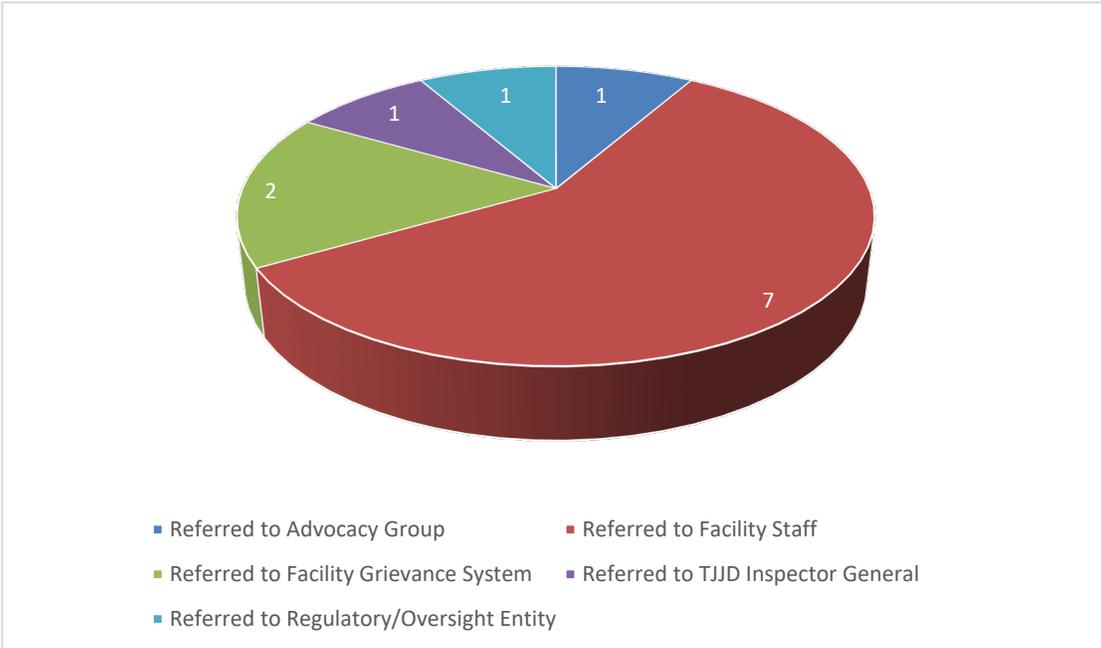
Referrals to Office of Inspector General (OIG)-Allegations that are criminal in nature are referred to OIG for investigation.

Referrals to TJJJ Administrative Investigation Division (AID)-Allegations of staff misconduct related to policy violations are referred to AID.

**Referrals for County Post-Adjudicated Facilities
Third Quarter FY 24**



**Referrals for County Post-Adjudicated Facilities
Third Quarter FY 23**



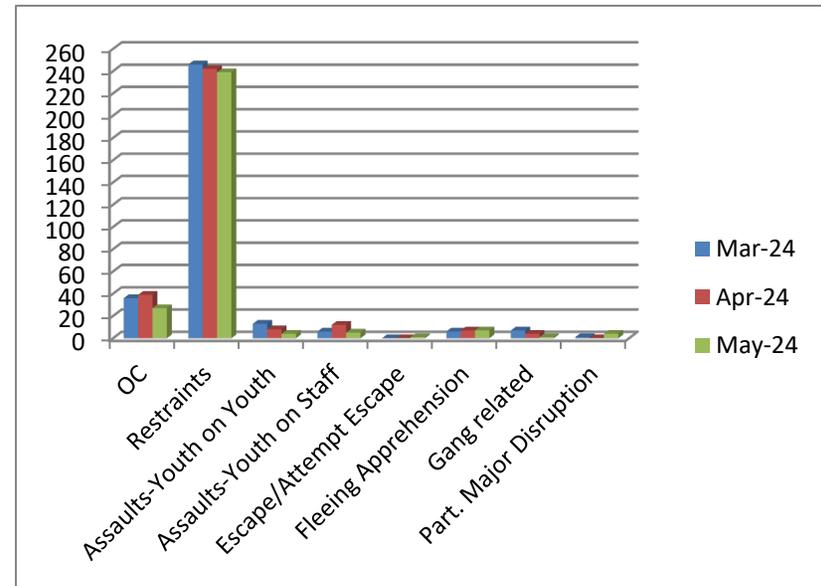
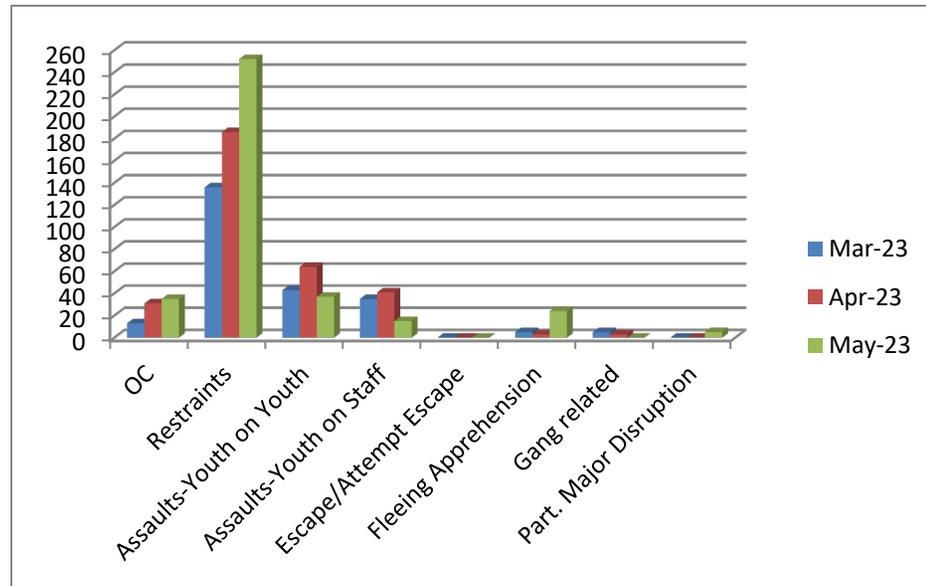
INCIDENT TRENDS FOR TJJD SECURE FACILITIES

The OIO reviews on a monthly basis at the secure correctional facilities the number of incidents involving the use of OC pepper spray, the number of youth restrained, assaults involving youth on youth and youth on staff, escapes and attempted escapes, fleeing apprehensions, gang activities, and major disruptions. These metrics give the OIO some indication of the environment related to the safety and security of all the youth offenders as well as the staff within a particular facility. These metrics are by no means an absolute indicator and should be taken into context and combined with other factors when drawing conclusions regarding a particular facility.

Evins RJC

	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23
OC	13	31	35
Restraints	136	186	252
Assaults-Youth on Youth	43	64	37
Assaults-Youth on Staff	35	41	15
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	5	3	24
Gang related	5	3	0
Part. Major Disruption	0	0	5

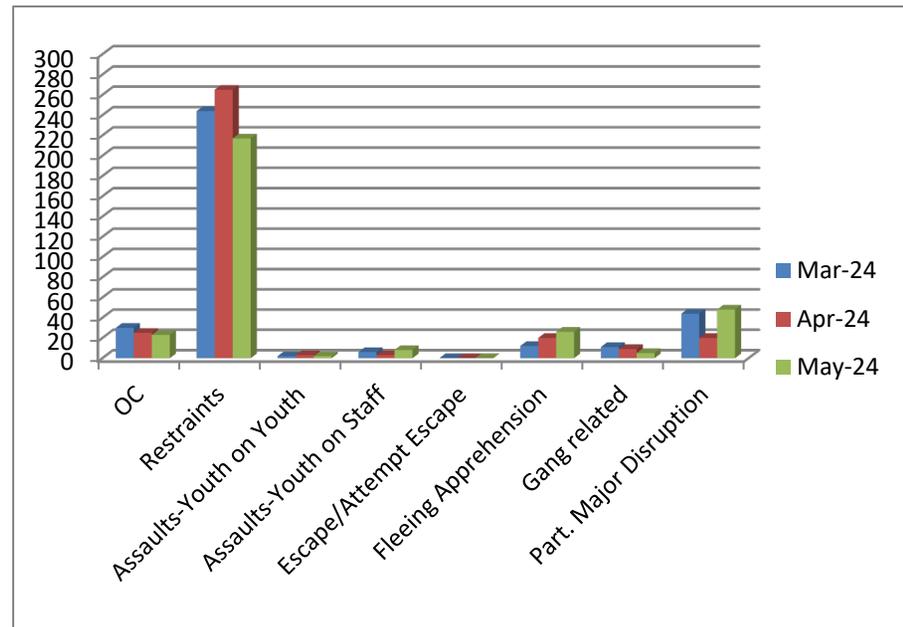
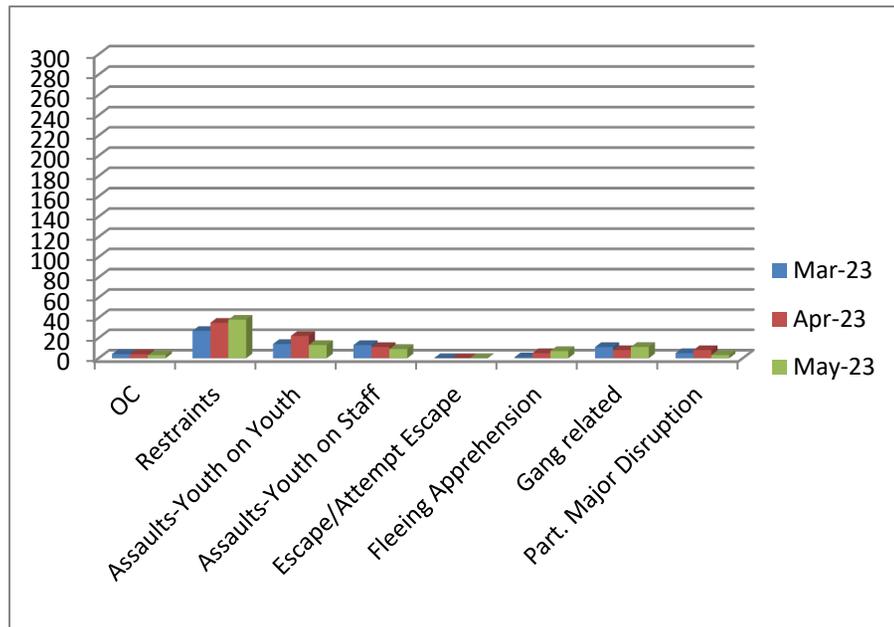
	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC	36	39	27
Restraints	246	242	239
Assaults-Youth on Youth	13	8	4
Assaults-Youth on Staff	6	12	5
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	1
Fleeing Apprehension	6	7	7
Gang related	7	4	1
Part. Major Disruption	1	0	4



Gainesville State School

	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23
OC	4	4	3
Restraints	27	35	38
Assaults-Youth on Youth	14	22	13
Assaults-Youth on Staff	13	11	9
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	1	5	7
Gang related	11	8	11
Part. Major Disruption	5	8	3

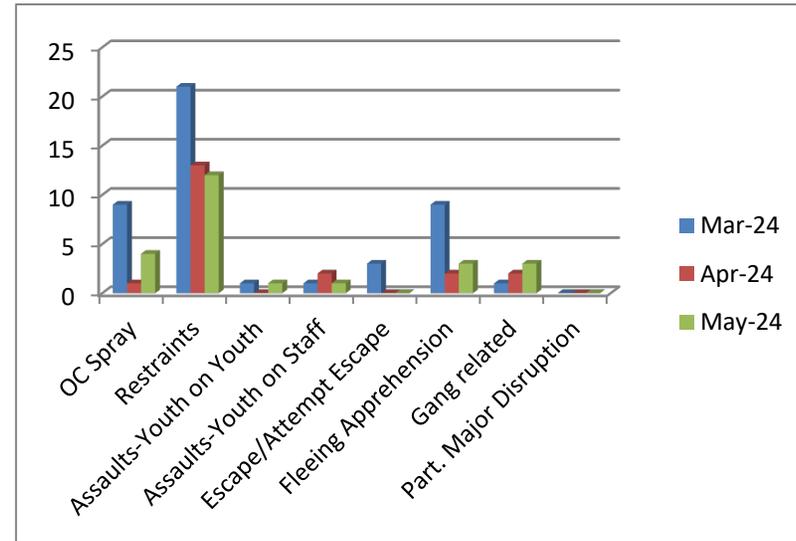
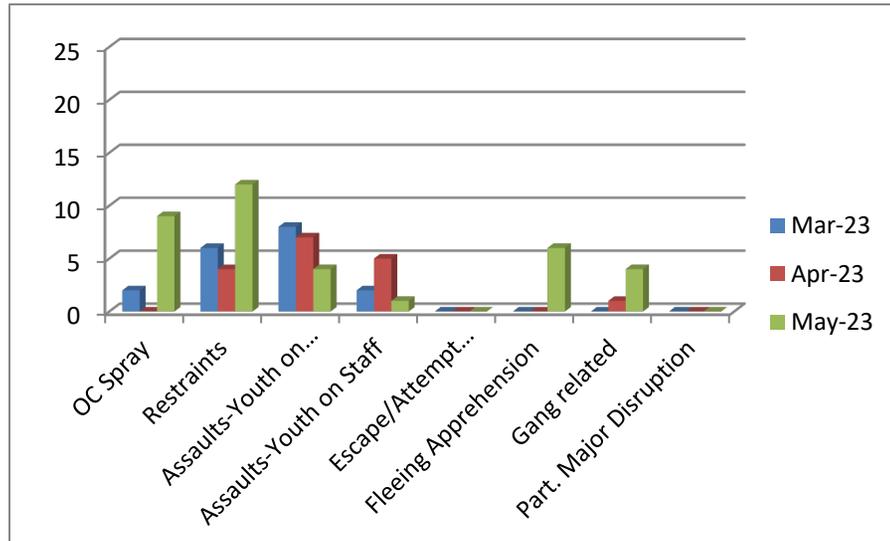
Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
30	25	23
244	265	217
2	3	2
6	3	8
0	0	0
12	20	26
11	9	5
44	20	48



Giddings State School

	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23
OC Spray	2	0	9
Restraints	6	4	12
Assaults-Youth on Youth	8	7	4
Assaults-Youth on Staff	2	5	1
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	0	0	6
Gang related	0	1	4
Part. Major Disruption	0	0	0

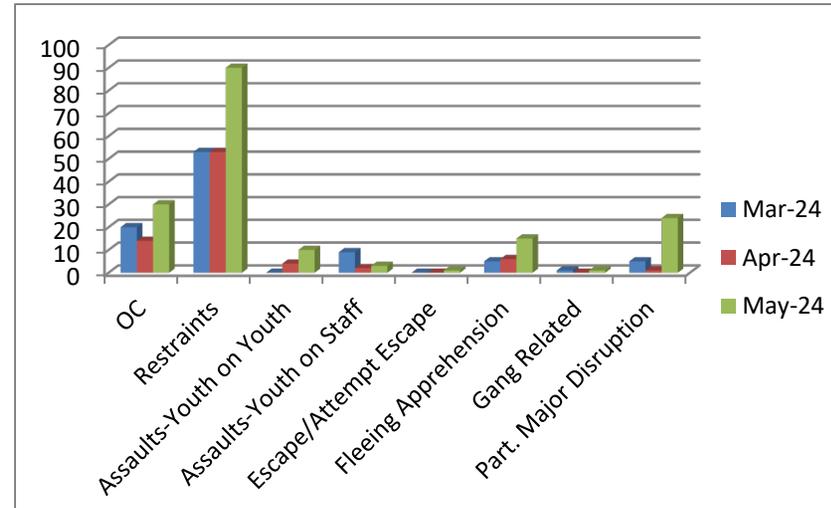
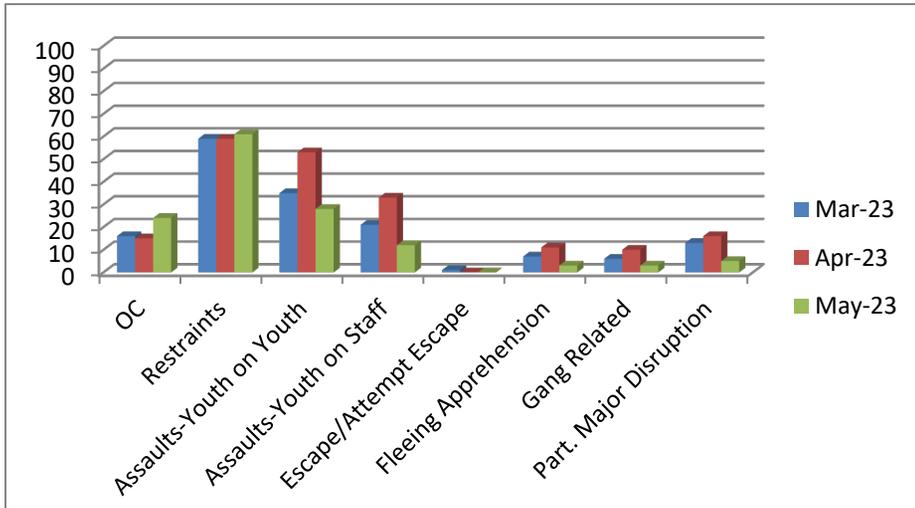
	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	9	1	4
Restraints	21	13	12
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	0	1
Assaults-Youth on Staff	1	2	1
Escape/Attempt Escape	3	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	9	2	3
Gang related	1	2	3
Part. Major Disruption	0	0	0



McLennan County SJCF

	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23
OC	16	15	24
Restraints	59	59	61
Assaults-Youth on Youth	35	53	28
Assaults-Youth on Staff	21	33	12
Escape/Attempt Escape	1	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	7	11	3
Gang Related	6	10	3
Part. Major Disruption	13	16	5

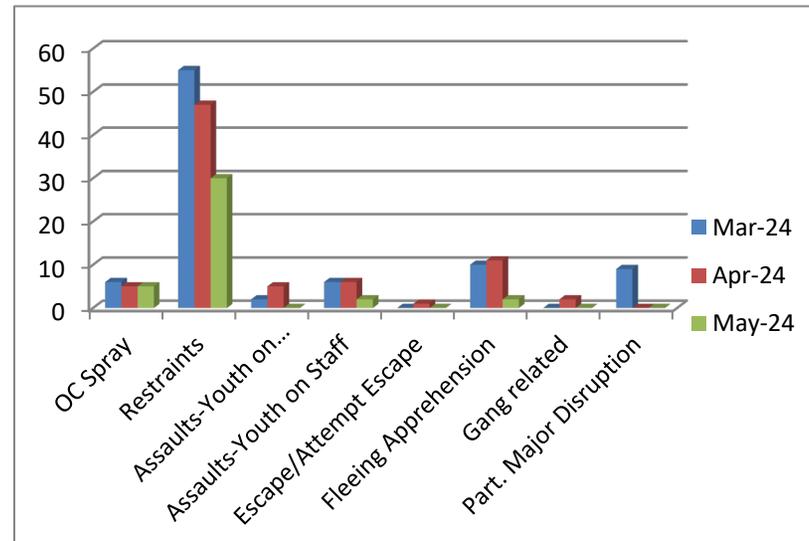
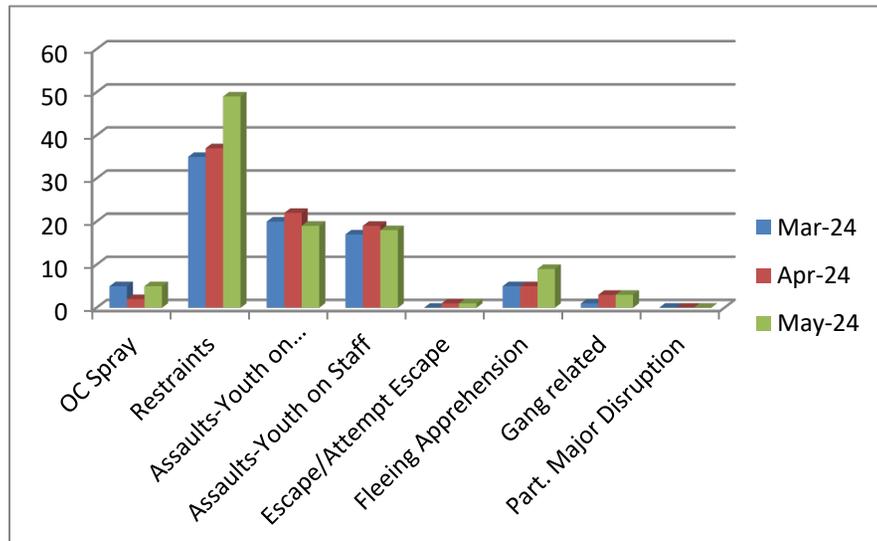
	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC	20	14	30
Restraints	53	53	90
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	4	10
Assaults-Youth on Staff	9	2	3
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	1
Fleeing Apprehension	5	6	15
Gang Related	1	0	1
Part. Major Disruption	5	1	24



Giddings Mental Health Treatment Program

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	5	2	5
Restraints	35	37	49
Assaults-Youth on Youth	20	22	19
Assaults-Youth on Staff	17	19	18
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	1	1
Fleeing Apprehension	5	5	9
Gang related	1	3	3
Part. Major Disruption	0	0	0

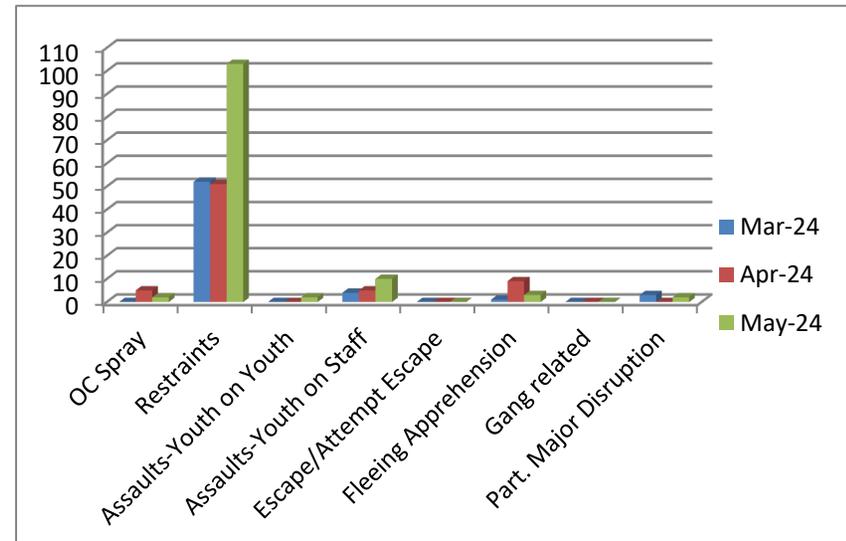
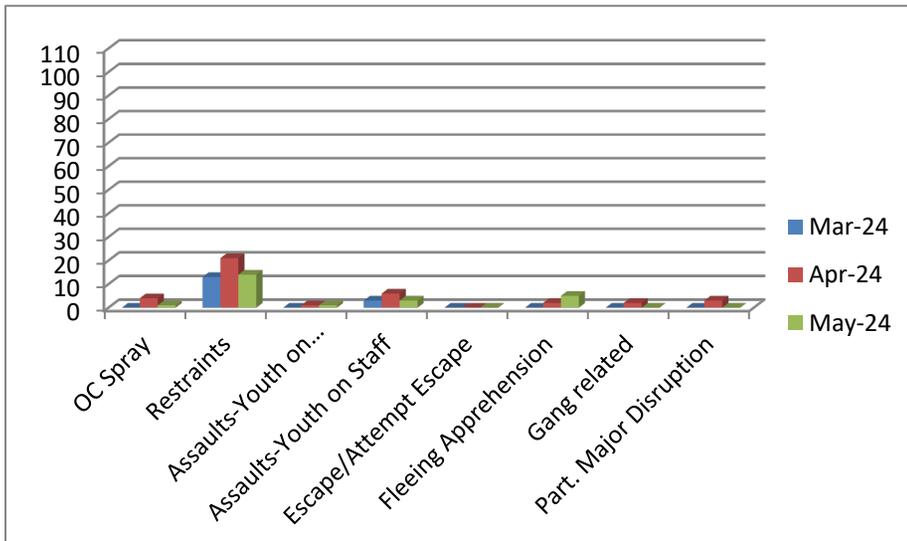
Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
6	5	5
55	47	30
2	5	0
6	6	2
0	1	0
10	11	2
0	2	0
9	0	0



Ron Jackson SJCC

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	0	4	1
Restraints	13	21	14
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	1	1
Assaults-Youth on Staff	3	6	3
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	0	2	5
Gang related	0	2	0
Part. Major Disruption	0	3	0

Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
0	5	2
52	51	103
0	0	2
4	5	10
0	0	0
1	9	3
0	0	0
3	0	2



Phoenix Program

The Phoenix Program is designed to protect staff and youth in TJJJD state-operated facilities from highly aggressive youth. The Phoenix Program provides these aggressive youth with a highly structured environment designed to reduce their aggression and to help them progress in treatment.

	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23
OC	7	4	8
Restraints	48	82	94
Assaults-Youth on Youth	13	11	11
Assaults-Youth on Staff	25	25	17
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	0	1	3
Gang related	0	0	0
Part. Major Disruption	0	0	3

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
	9	8	5
	61	80	85
	5	1	3
	1	6	3
	0	0	0
	0	1	0
	2	0	0
	0	1	0

The OIO is in a unique position to observe trends and patterns from an objective position within the secure facilities in the course of site visits, records review, staff and youth interviews along with the review of complaints and grievances. The OIO remains concerned by high staff turnover rates and staff shortages, which lead to staff fatigue and ultimately decreased supervision of youth offenders within the State secure facilities.

The 3rd Quarter reporting period also reflected the transition of the position of Chief Ombudsman from J.D. Robertson to myself. During this quarter I began the onboarding process to the position of Chief Ombudsman as well as evaluating the operational and budgetary functions of the OIO.

R. Sean McCleskey, Chief
 Office of the Independent Ombudsman
 For the Texas Juvenile Justice Department
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 Austin TX 78701

ANNEX

TJJD site visits conducted by IO staff during the third quarter

Secure Facilities

Evins Regional Juvenile Center-*Edinburg TX*

Gainesville State School-*Gainesville TX*

Giddings State School-*Giddings TX*

McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility-*Mart TX*

Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex -*Brownwood TX*

TJJD Halfway Houses

Ayres House-*San Antonio TX*

Edna Tamayo House-*Harlingen TX*

Schaeffer House-*El Paso TX*

Contract Care Facilities

Austin State Hospital-*Austin TX*

Terrell State Hospital-*Terrell TX*

Parole

Region Central

Region East

Region North

County post-adjudicated facility site visits conducted by IO staff during the third quarter

County Operated

Amador R Rodriguez Boot Camp & Educational Center-*San Benito TX (Cameron County)*
Atascosa County Juvenile Justice Center-*Jourdanton TX*
Bell County Juvenile Services Center-*Killeen TX*
Brazoria County Residential Treatment Facility-*Angleton TX*
Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment-*San Antonio TX (Bexar County)*
Dallas County Youth Village-*Dallas TX*
Dallas County-HOPE-*Dallas TX*
Dallas County Residential Drug Treatment-*Dallas TX*
Dallas County-STARs-*Dallas TX*
Denton County Secure Correctional Facility-*Denton TX*
Fort Bend County Juvenile Leadership Academy-*Katy TX*
Grayson County Post-Adjudication Facility-*Denison TX*
HOPE Academy-*Tyler TX*
Harris County Leadership Academy-*Katy TX*
Harris County Youth Village-*Houston TX*
Hays County Juvenile Post Detention Center-*San Marcos TX*
Jerry J. Esmond Juvenile Justice Center-*Dickinson TX (Galveston County)*
John R. Roach Juvenile Detention Center-*McKinney TX*
Judge Mario E. Ramirez Jr. Juvenile Justice Center-*Weslaco TX (Hidalgo County)*
L.I.F.E. & B.R.A.V.E. Residential Program-*San Benito TX (Cameron County)*
Letot Residential Treatment Center-*Dallas TX*
Lubbock County Juvenile Justice Center-*Lubbock TX*
Lyle B Medlock Treatment Facility-*Dallas TX*
Marzelle Hill Transition Center-*Dallas TX*
Meurer Intermediate Sanctions Center & Halfway House-*Austin TX (Travis County)*
Robert N. Barnes Regional Juvenile Facility-*Corpus Christi TX (Nueces County)*
Samuel F. Santana Challenge Program-*El Paso*
The Youth Center of the High Plains-*Amarillo TX (Randall County)*
Van Zandt County Youth Multi-Service Center-*Grand Saline TX*
Victoria Regional Juvenile Justice Facility-*Victoria TX*
Williamson County C.O.R.E. Program-*Georgetown TX*
Willoughby Juvenile Services-*Marshall TX (Harrison County)*

Contract Care Facilities for Post Adjudicated

Arms of Hope-*Medina TX*
Athletes for Change-*Glenn Heights TX*
Azleway Drug Treatment Program-*Big Sandy TX*
Bridge Emergency Shelter-*San Antonio TX*
Cal Farley's Boys Ranch-*Amarillo TX*
Center for Success and Independence-*Houston TX*
Center for Success and Independence-*Rockdale TX*
Cherokee Home for Children-*Cherokee TX*
Everyday Life RTC-*Bryan TX*
Garza County RJC-*Post TX*
Gulf Coast Trades Center-*New Waverly TX*
High Plains Children's Home-*Amarillo TX*
Laurel Ridge Treatment Center-*San Antonio TX*
Meadowland-Roy Maas Youth Alternatives-*Boerne TX*
Mesquite Treatment Center-*Lyford TX*
Methodist Home-*Waco TX*
MHMR Tarrant County-*Fort Worth TX*
Monarch Academy for Girls-*Denison TX*

New Horizons-*Abilene TX*
New Horizons-*Goldthwaite TX*
New Life Children's Home-*Canyon Lake TX*
North Texas State Hospital-*Vernon TX*
North Texas State Hospital-*Wichita Falls TX*
Odyssey House-*Houston TX*
Pathways Wilderness Program-*Mountain Home TX*
Reed Adolescent Center-*Plainview TX*
Rite of Passage, Inc-*Brownwood TX*
Rite of Passage, Inc-*Granbury TX*
San Marcos Treatment Center-*San Marcos TX*
SCAN Youth Recovery Home-*Laredo TX*
SCAN Youth Recovery Home-*San Benito TX*
Shoreline RTC-*Taft TX*
Sundown Ranch-*Canton TX*
West Texas Boys Ranch-*San Angelo TX*