

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



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**Fourth Quarter Report FY 24**

June 1, 2024 to August 31, 2024

## **INTRODUCTION**

This is the fourth Quarterly Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 to be submitted by the Office of Independent Ombudsman for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) 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 TJJD Governing Board, the TJJD Executive Director, and the Texas State Auditor. This report will cover the reporting period of June 2024 through August 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 84<sup>th</sup> 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 TJJD 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, 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

During this reporting period, the Office of Independent Ombudsman conducted 104 facility site visits and interviewed 866 youth offenders (Refer to the Annex for a listing of facility site visit locations). During this quarter, the OIO opened two individual cases and closed one. The individual case was 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 (JCO). The Juvenile Justice Department continues to experience difficulty in recruiting and retention in the JCO position.

## **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 TJJD. 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

	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter FY23</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter FY24</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Quarter FY 24</b>	<b>FY24 Total</b>
<b>TJJD/Contract Site Visits</b>	27	27	25	106
<b>County Post Adjudicated/Contract Facility Site Visits</b>	71	67	79	290
<b>Number of Youth Interviewed</b>	768	804	866	2290
<b>Number of Youth Interviews Conducted</b>	889	954	999	3697
<b>Closed Individual Cases</b>	1	5	1	13

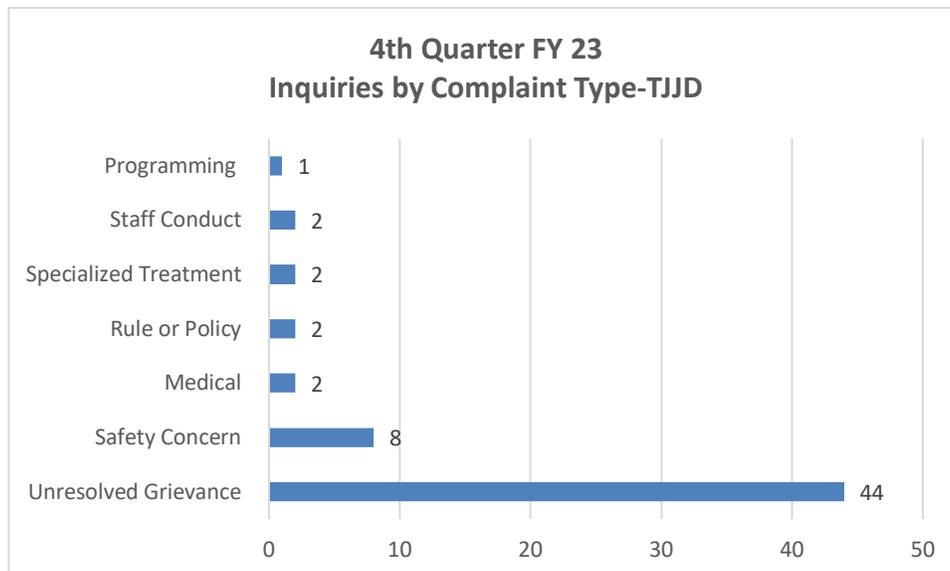
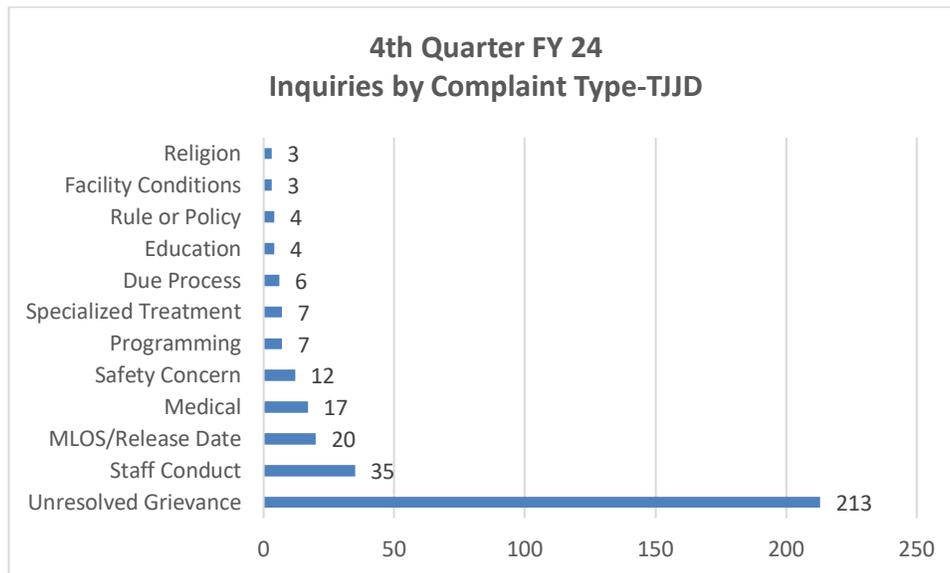
## Inquiries

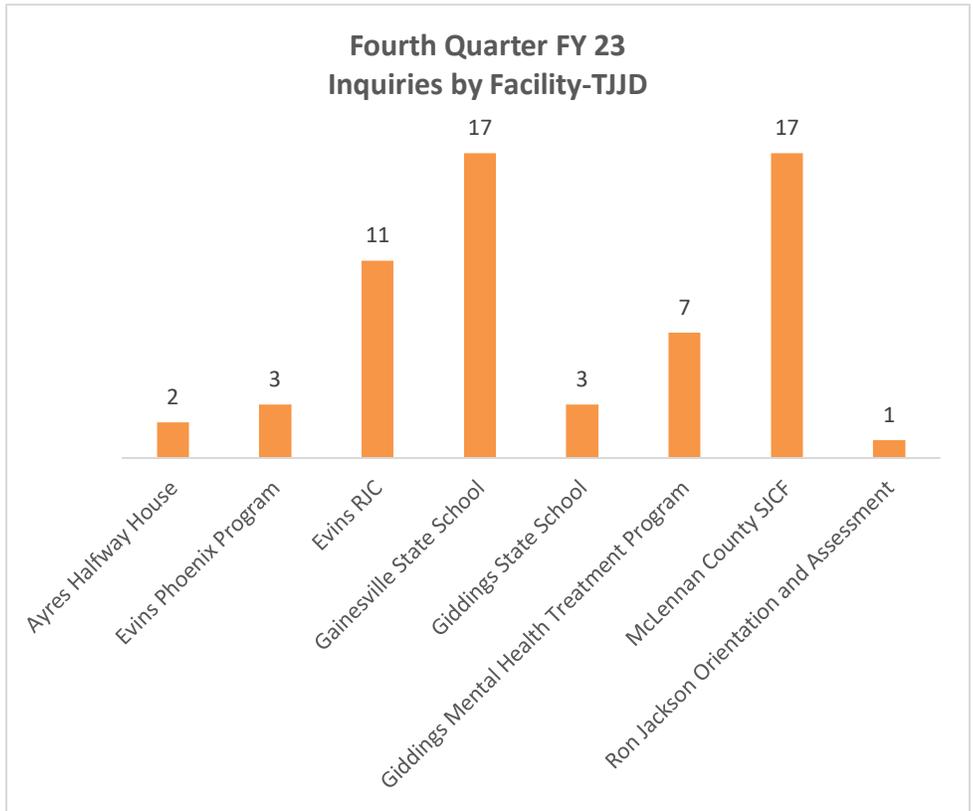
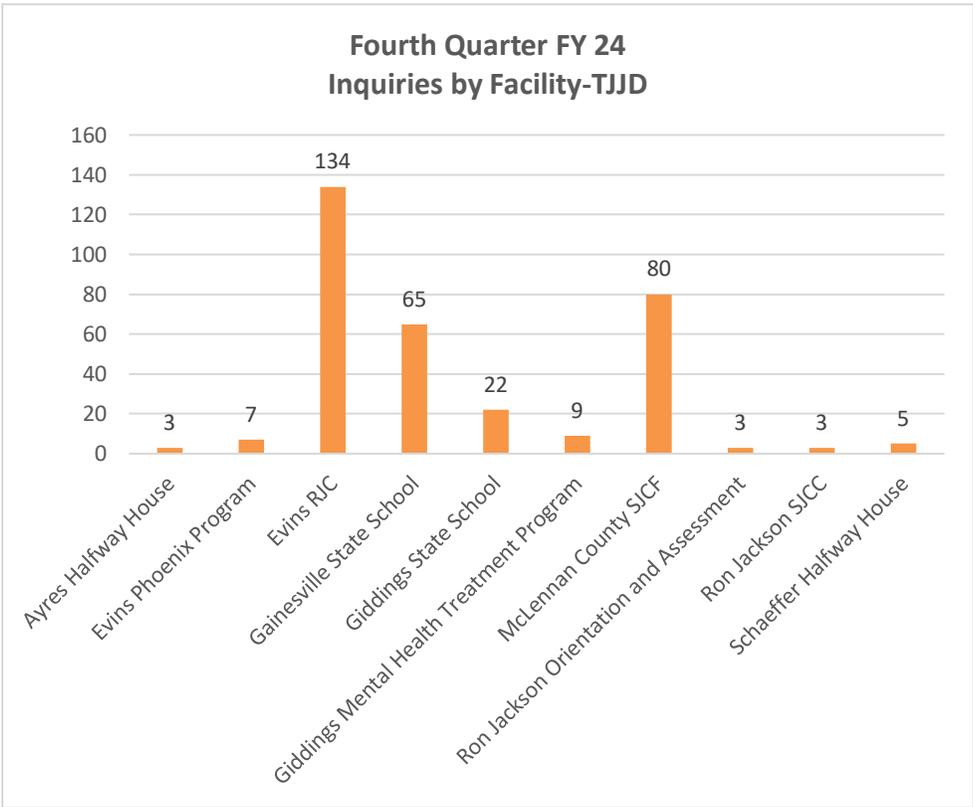
An inquiry is a review of potential youth rights violation(s) conducted by the OIO. All inquiries are thoroughly reviewed and may include interviews of involved youth and staff, review of relevant paperwork, and video review. The OIO obtains information related to potential youth rights violations utilizing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

The OIO received 336 complaints during the fourth quarter of FY 24, 331 related to TJJD and five related to county post-adjudicated facilities. When compared to the fourth quarter of FY 23, this represents an increase of 360%.

### Inquiries TJJD

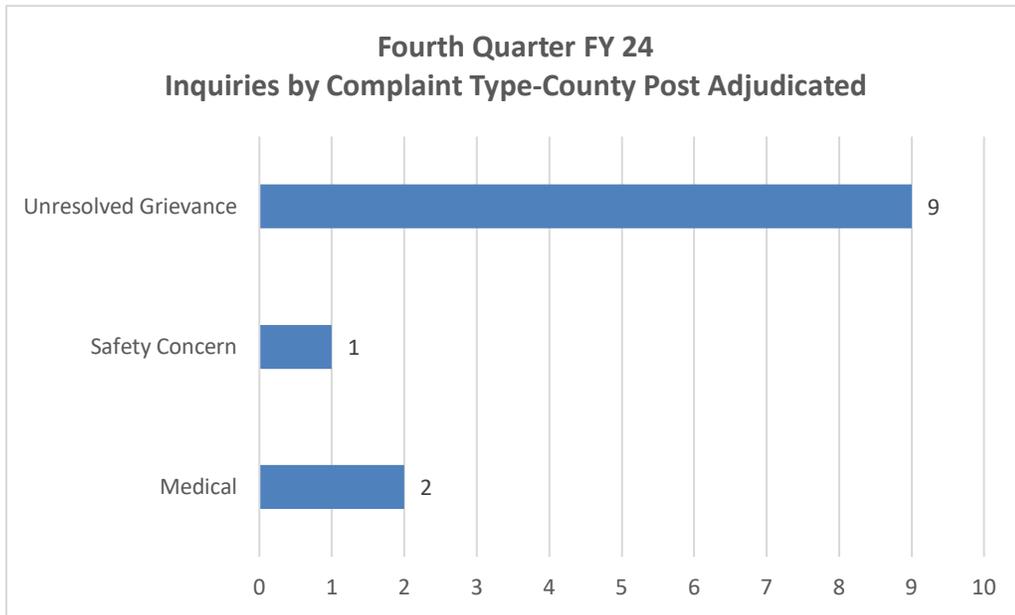
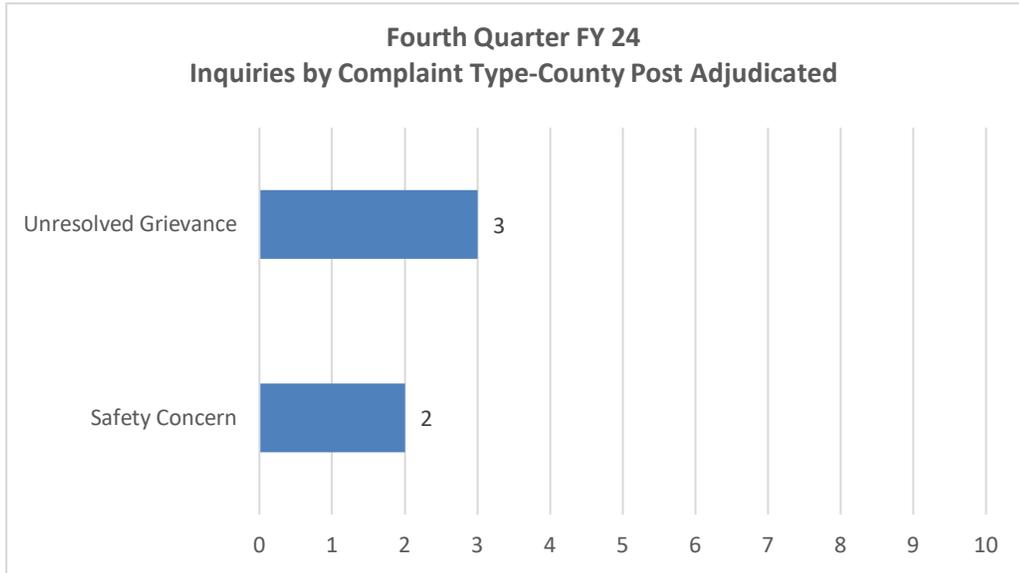
Of the 336 complaints received during the fourth quarter, 331 were Inquiries related to TJJD youth.





*Inquiries-County*

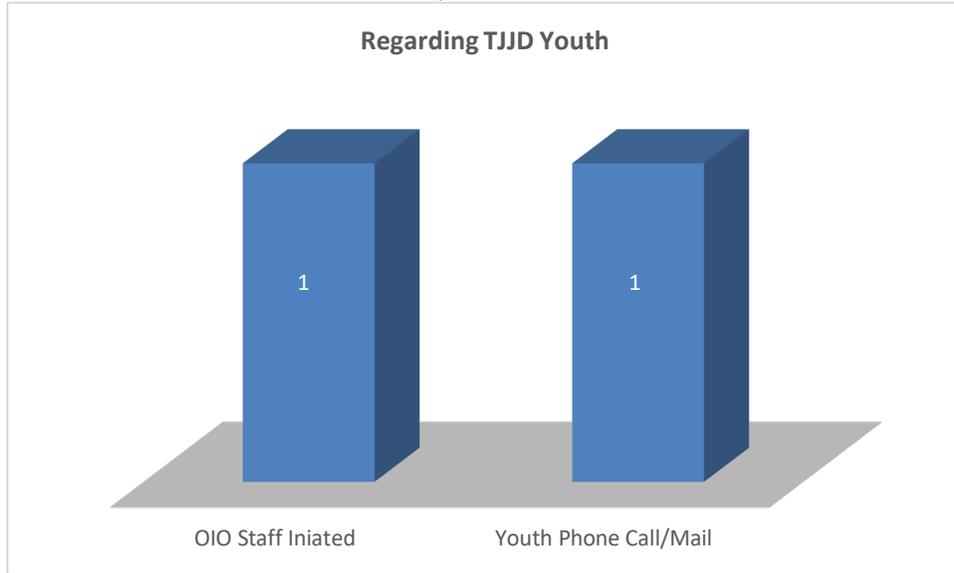
Of the 340 complaints received during the fourth quarter of FY 24, five were Inquiries related to County post-adjudicated youth



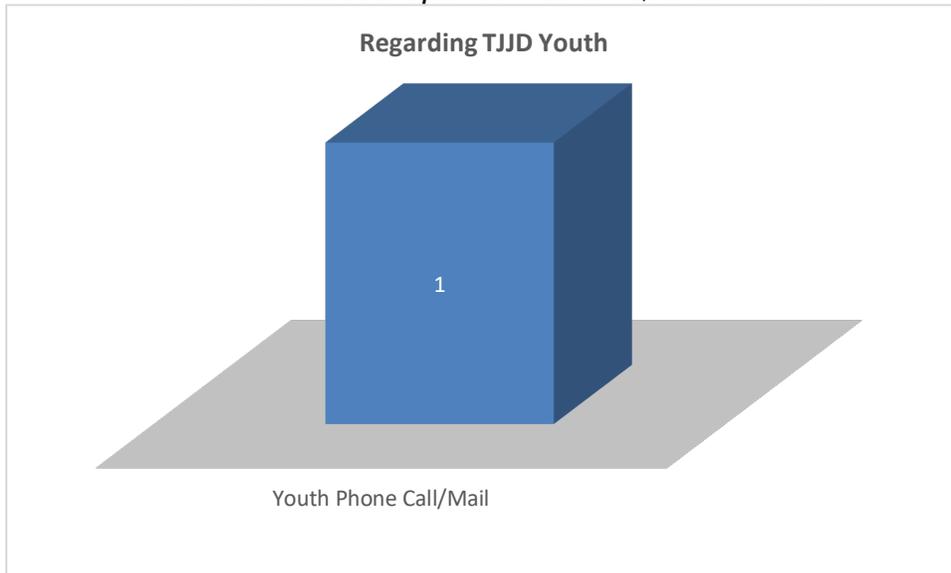
## Individual Cases

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 fourth quarter of FY 24, the OIO opened two complaints as individual cases, both involving TJJD youth. This is an increase of 100% from the fourth quarter of FY 23.

*Individual Cases Opened-Fourth Quarter FY 24*



*Individual Cases Opened-Fourth Quarter FY 23*



**Individual Cases by Facility-Fourth Quarter FY 24**

	<b>Total for Facility</b>	<b>Unresolved Grievance</b>	<b>Safety Concern</b>
<b>TJJD/Contract Facilities</b>			
McLennan County SJCF	2	1	1

**Individual Cases by Facility-Fourth Quarter FY 23**

	<b>Total for Facility</b>	<b>Unresolved Grievance</b>
<b>TJJD/Contract Facilities</b>		
McLennan County SJCF	1	1

## Closed Individual Cases

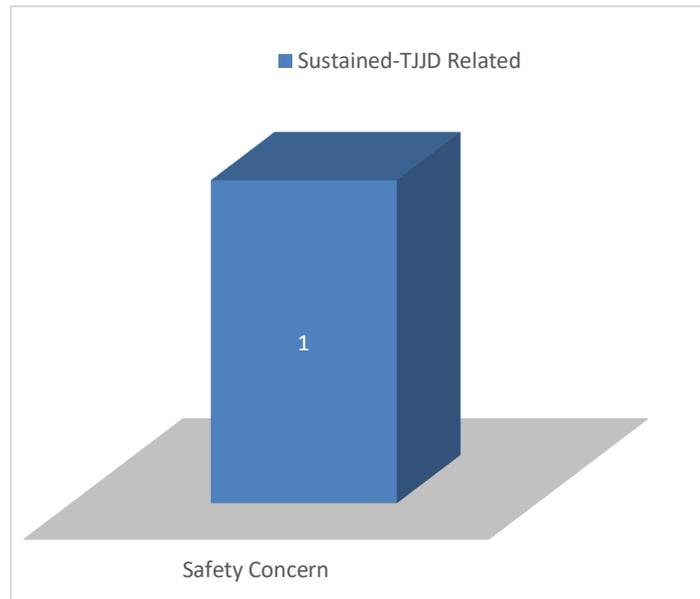
The OIO closed one individual cases during the fourth quarter of FY 24 involving a TJJD youth.

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

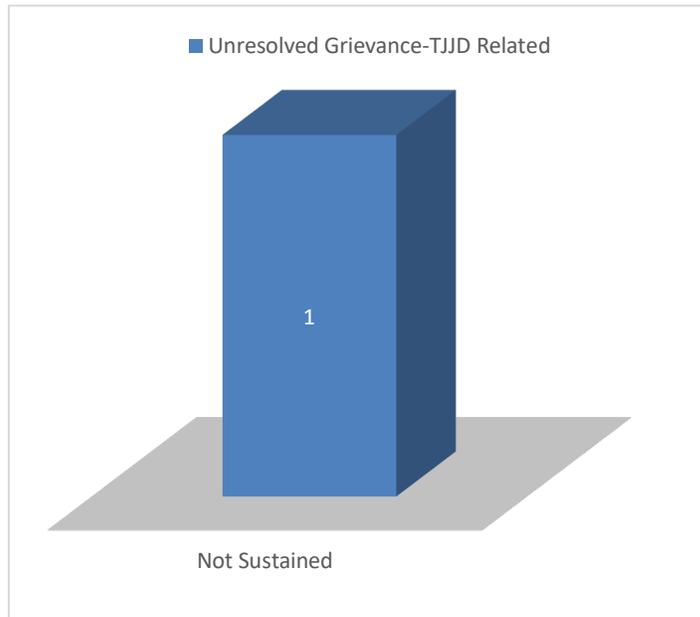
**Not Sustained**-There is insufficient information or evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.

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

### Individual Case Type & Disposition-Fourth Quarter FY 24



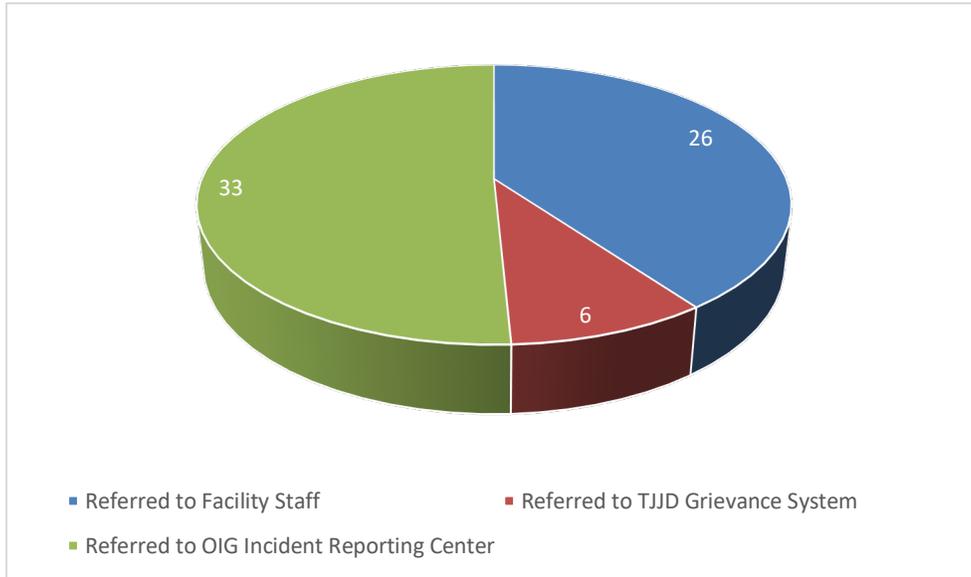
### Individual Case Type & Disposition-Fourth Quarter FY 23



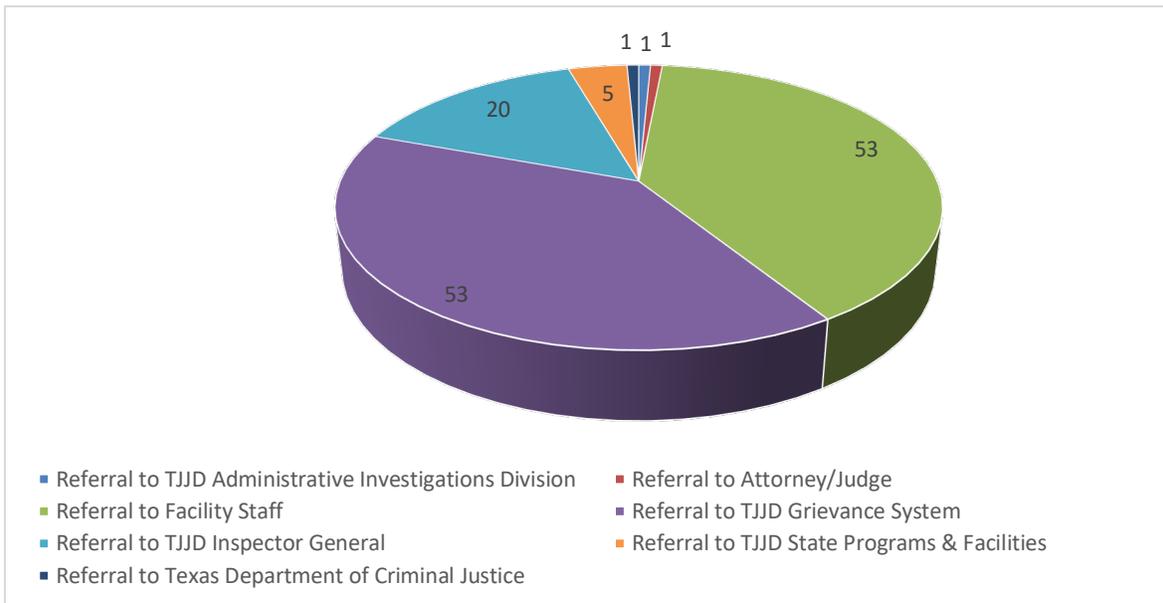
**Referrals**

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 fourth quarter of FY 24, the OIO received 69 referrals. This is a decrease of 51% from the fourth quarter of FY 23.

**Referrals for TJJJ-Fourth Quarter FY 24**



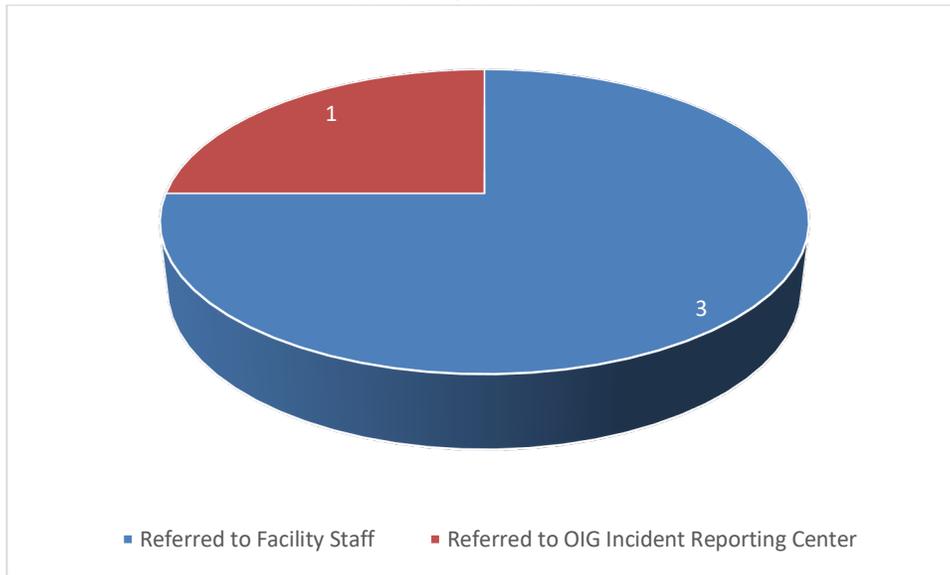
**Referrals for TJJJ-Fourth Quarter FY 23**



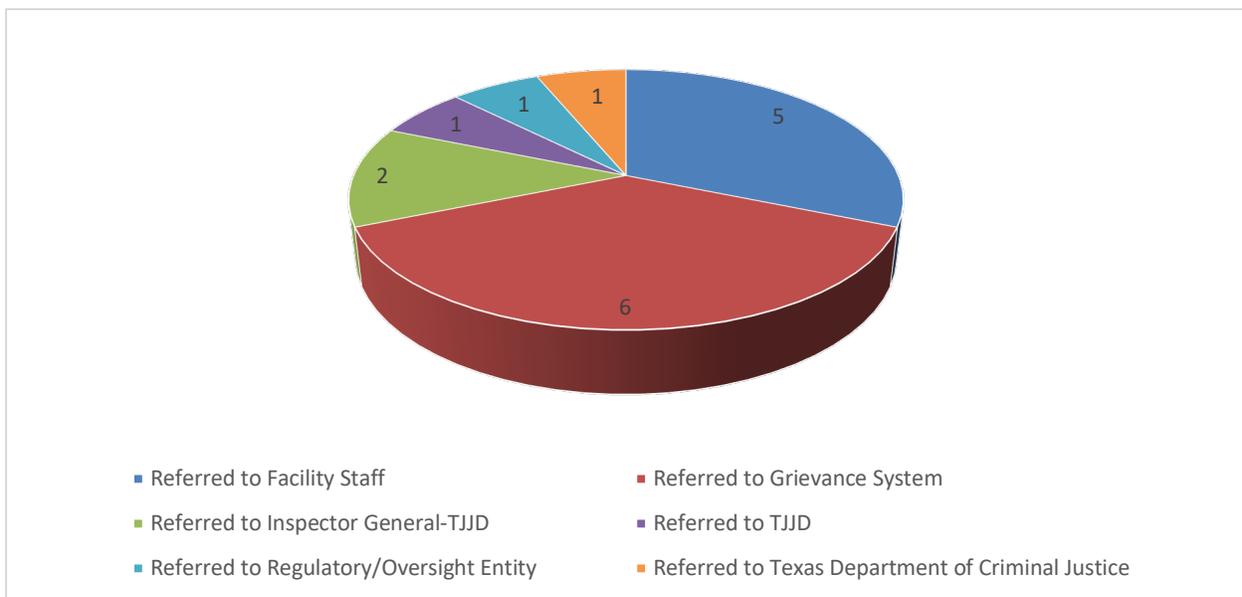
**Referrals to Office of Inspector General (OIG)**-Allegations that are criminal in nature are referred to OIG for investigation.

**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  
Fourth Quarter FY 24**



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

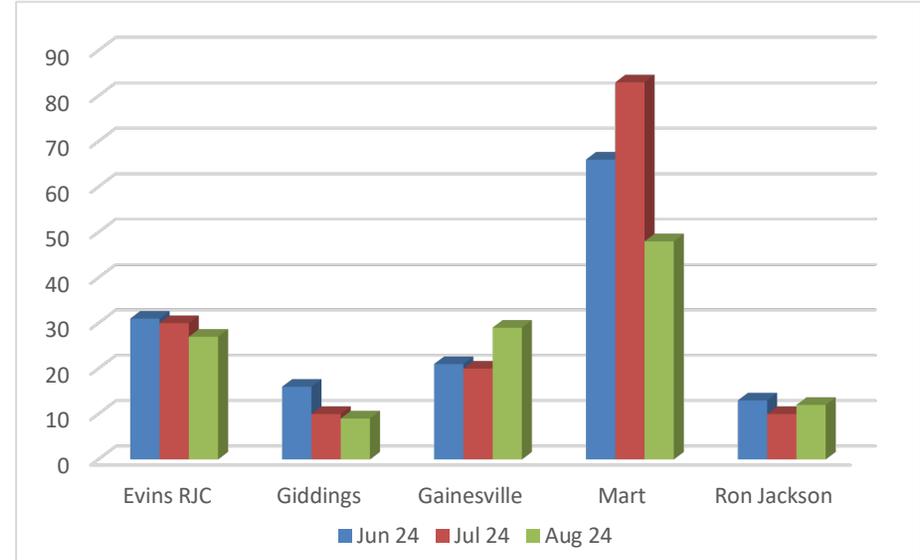
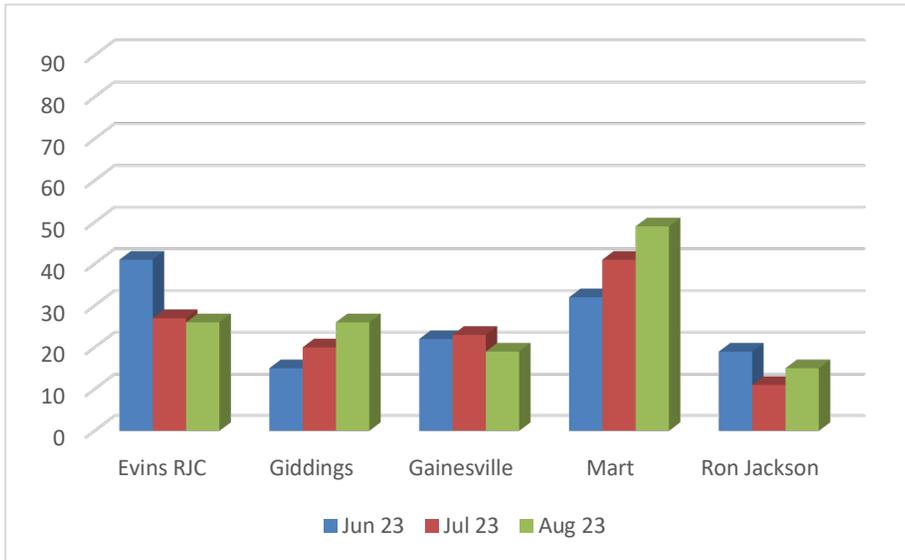


## INCIDENT TRENDS FOR TJJD SECURE FACILITIES

### Suicide Assessments

The following data represents the number of new assessments conducted, either from initial mental health screenings or suicide assessments, resulting in a youth who was not previously on suicide alert being placed on any kind of suicide alert. TJJD does not collect this data by program, therefore, the numbers reported below are for the entire facility.

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
<b>Evins RJC</b>	41	27	26	31	30	27
<b>Giddings State School</b>	15	20	26	16	10	9
<b>Gainesville State School</b>	22	23	19	21	20	29
<b>McLennan County SJCF</b>	32	41	49	66	83	48
<b>Ron Jackson SJCC</b>	19	11	15	13	10	12

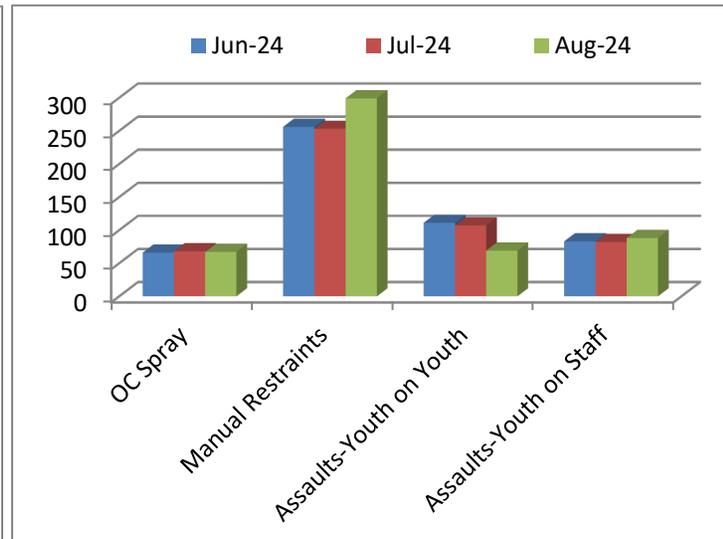
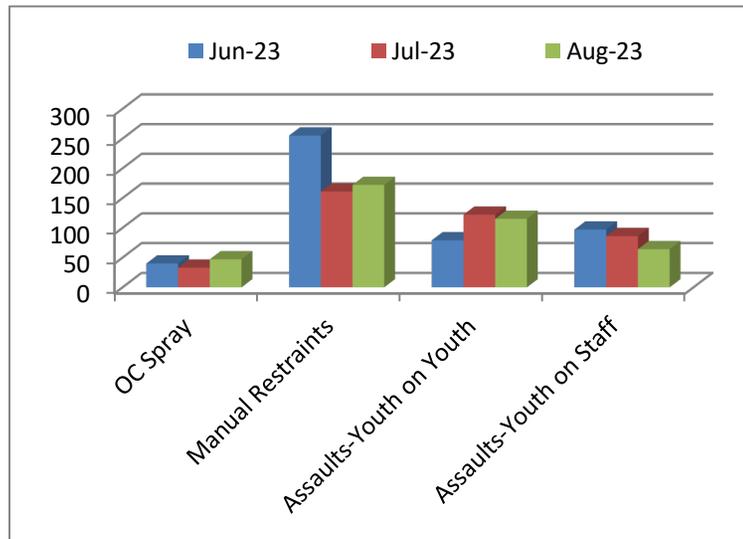


The OIO reviews on a monthly basis at the secure correctional facilities the number of incidents involving the use of OC pepper spray, the number of youth restrained, and assaults involving youth on youth and youth on staff. These metrics give the OIO some indication of the environment related to the 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**

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	40	33	47
Manual Restraints	255	161	172
Assaults-Youth on Youth	79	122	115
Assaults-Youth on Staff	97	86	64

	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
OC Spray	66	68	67
Manual Restraints	256	253	299
Assaults-Youth on Youth	111	107	69
Assaults-Youth on Staff	83	82	88

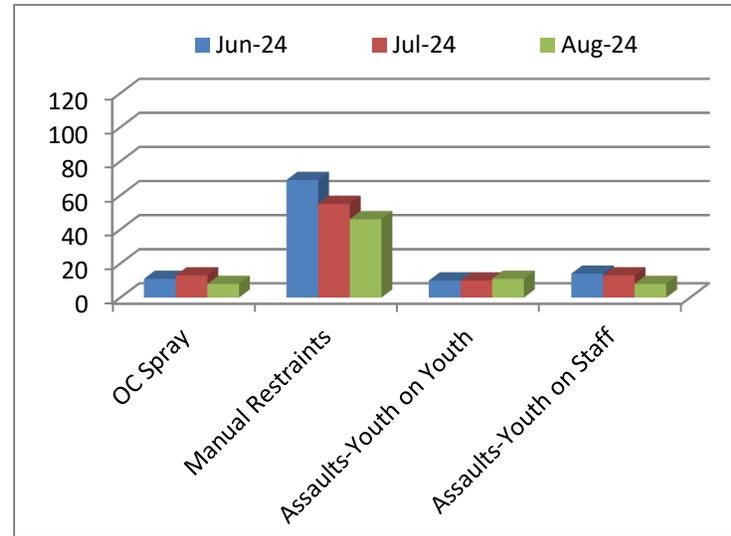
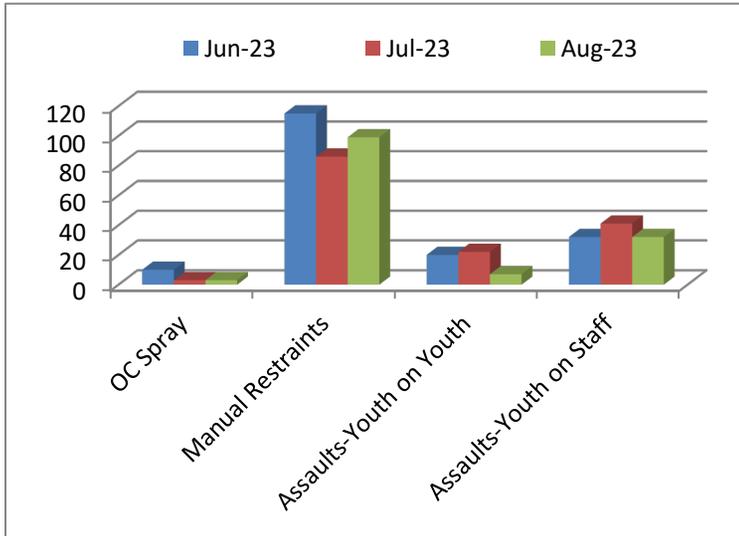


## Evins Phoenix Program

The Phoenix Program is designed to protect staff and youth in TJJJ 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.

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	10	3	3
Manual Restraints	115	86	99
Assaults-Youth on Youth	20	22	7
Assaults-Youth on Staff	32	41	32

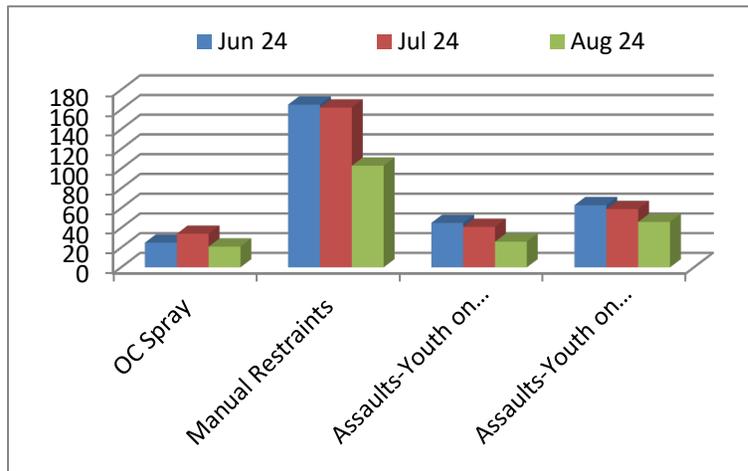
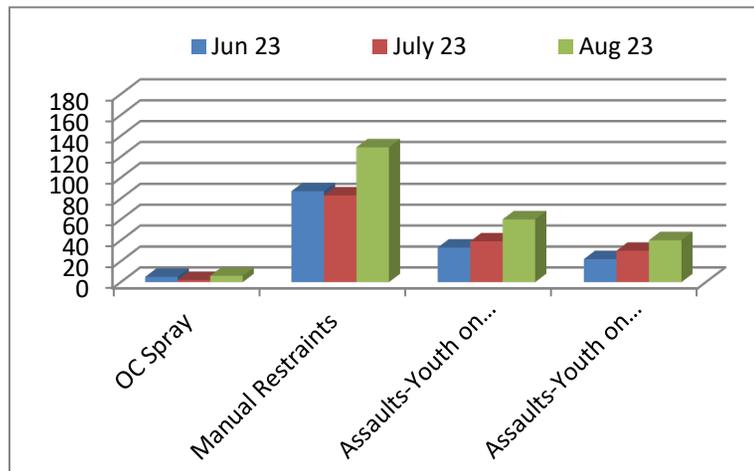
	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
OC Spray	11	13	8
Manual Restraints	69	55	46
Assaults-Youth on Youth	10	10	11
Assaults-Youth on Staff	14	13	8



## Gainesville State School

	Jun-23	July-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	5	2	6
Manual Restraints	87	83	129
Assaults-Youth on Youth	33	39	60
Assaults-Youth on Staff	22	30	40

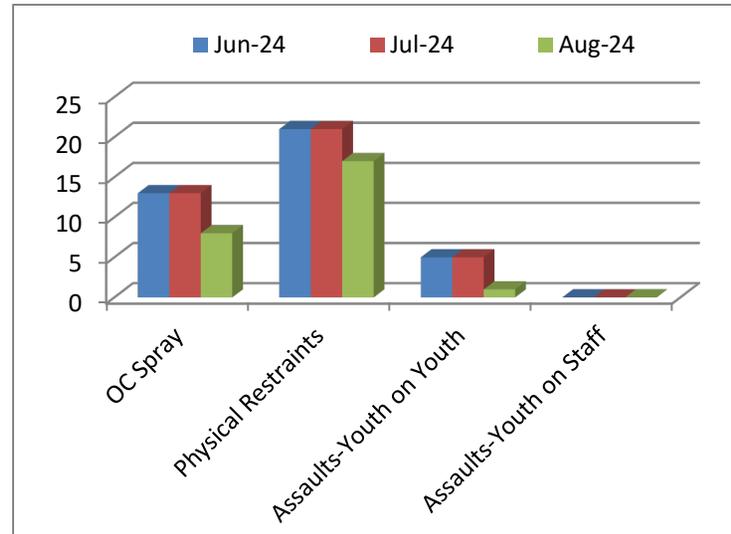
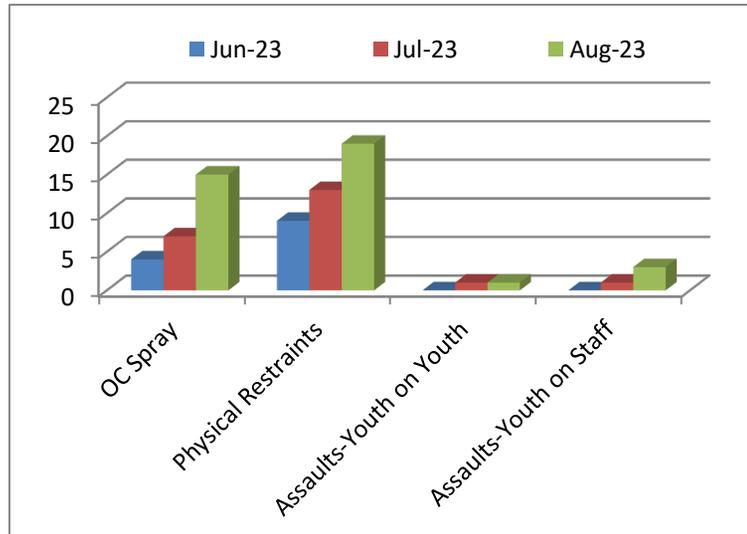
Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
25	34	21
165	162	103
45	41	26
63	59	46



## Giddings State School

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	4	7	15
Manual Restraints	9	13	19
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	1	1
Assaults-Youth on Staff	0	1	3

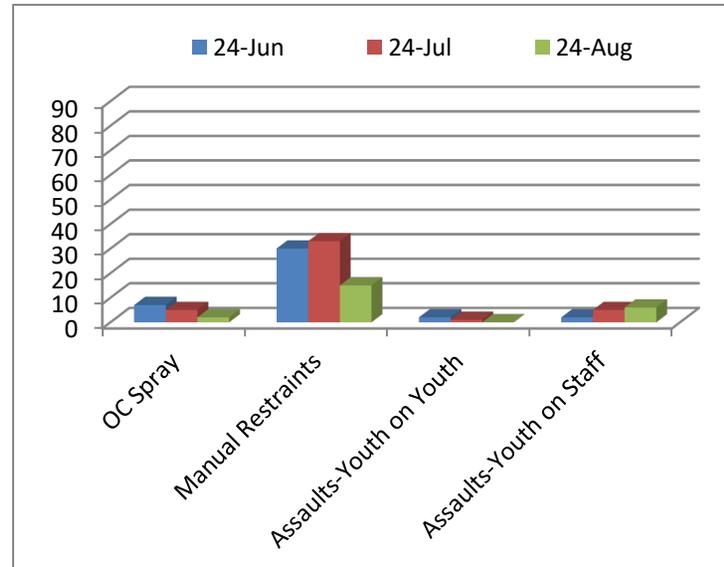
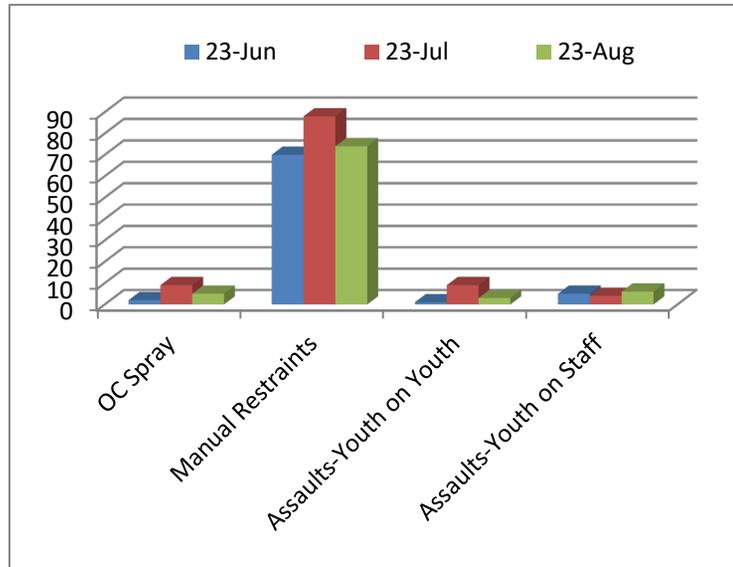
Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
13	13	8
21	21	17
5	5	1
0	0	0



## Giddings Mental Health Program

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	2	9	5
Manual Restraints	70	88	74
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	9	3
Assaults-Youth on Staff	5	4	6

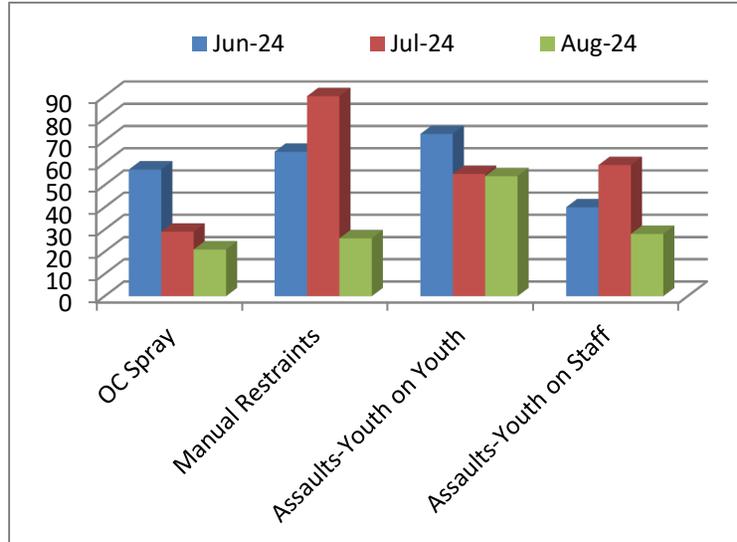
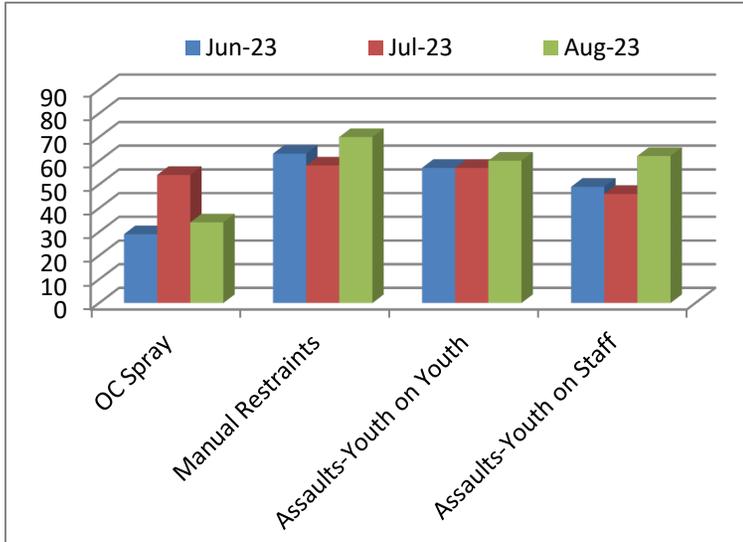
Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
7	5	2
30	33	15
2	1	0
2	5	6



# McLennan County SJCF

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	29	54	34
Manual Restraints	63	58	70
Assaults-Youth on Youth	57	57	60
Assaults-Youth on Staff	49	46	62

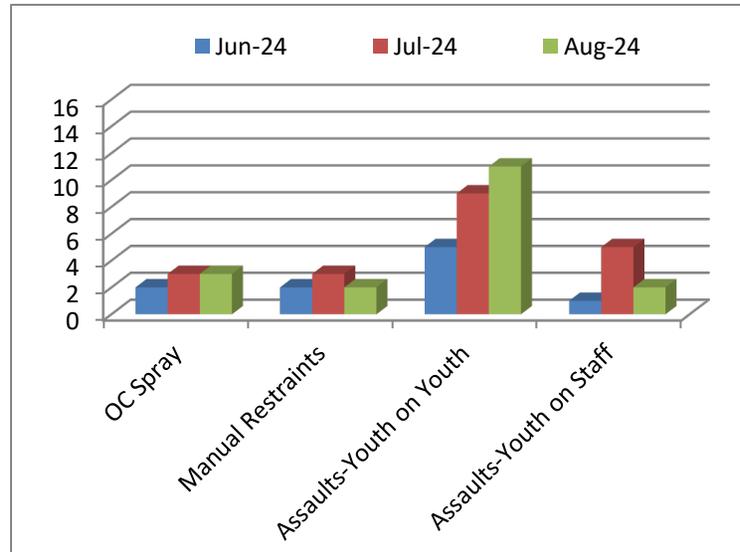
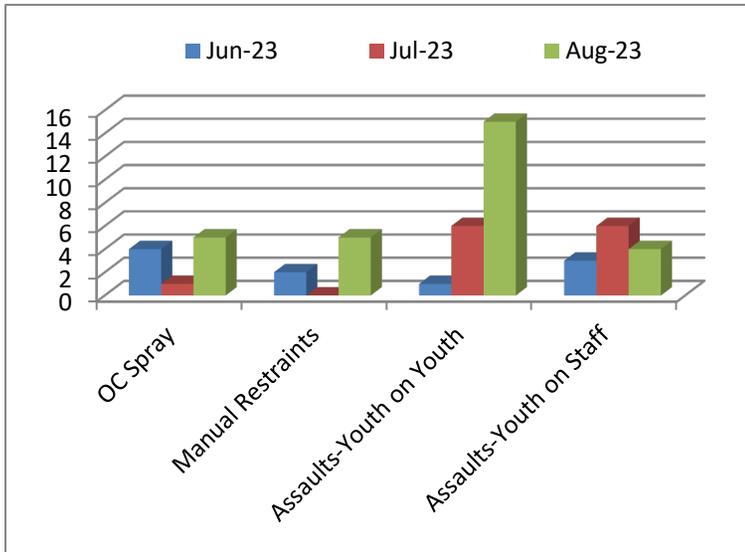
Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
57	29	21
65	90	26
73	55	54
40	59	28



## McLennan County SJCF-Young Male Program

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	4	1	5
Manual Restraints	2	0	5
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	6	15
Assaults-Youth on Staff	3	6	4

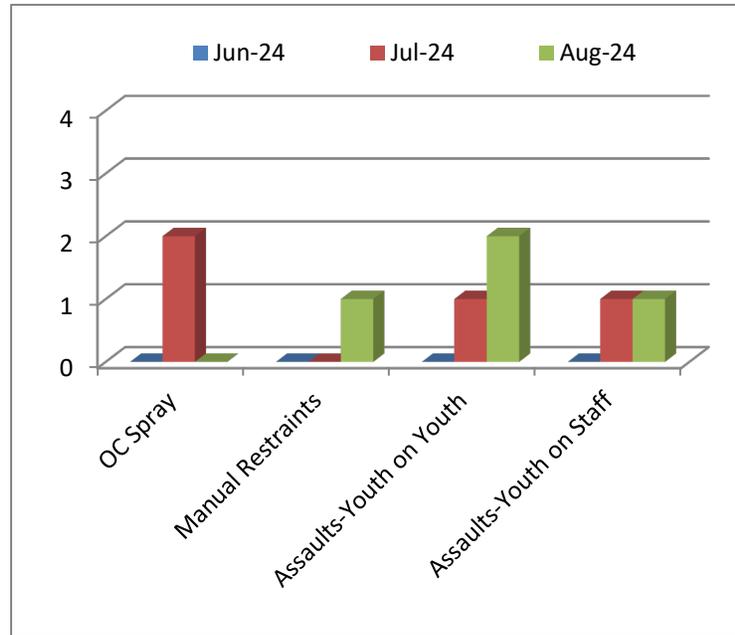
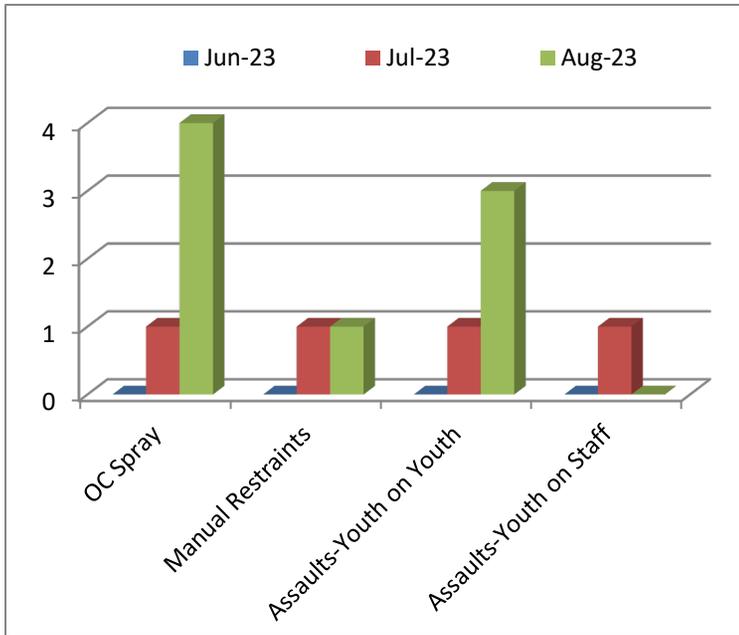
Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
2	3	3
2	3	2
5	9	11
1	5	2



### McLennan County SJCF-Orientation and Assessment (Females Only)

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	0	1	4
Manual Restraints	0	1	1
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	1	3
Assaults-Youth on Staff	0	1	0

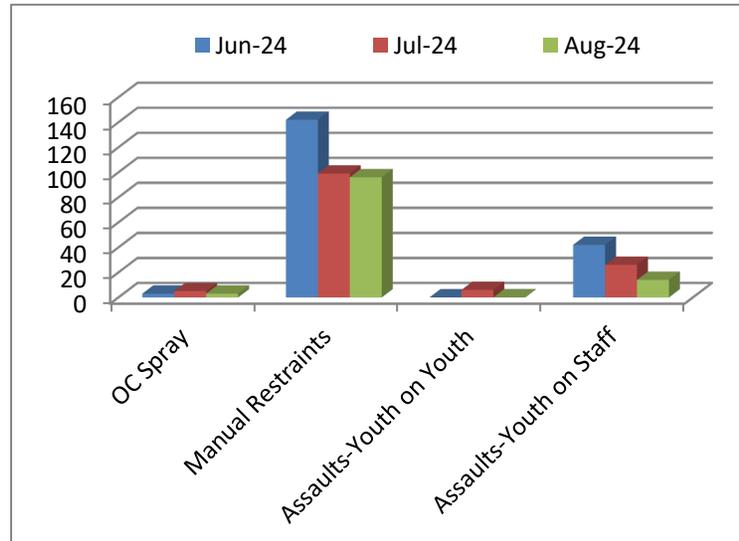
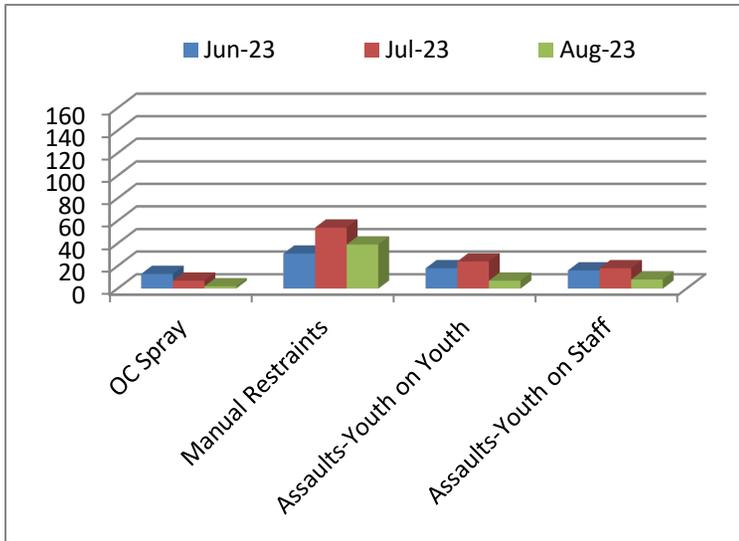
	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
OC Spray	0	2	0
Manual Restraints	0	0	1
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	1	2
Assaults-Youth on Staff	0	1	1



## Ron Jackson SJCC

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	13	7	2
Manual Restraints	31	54	39
Assaults-Youth on Youth	18	24	7
Assaults-Youth on Staff	16	18	8

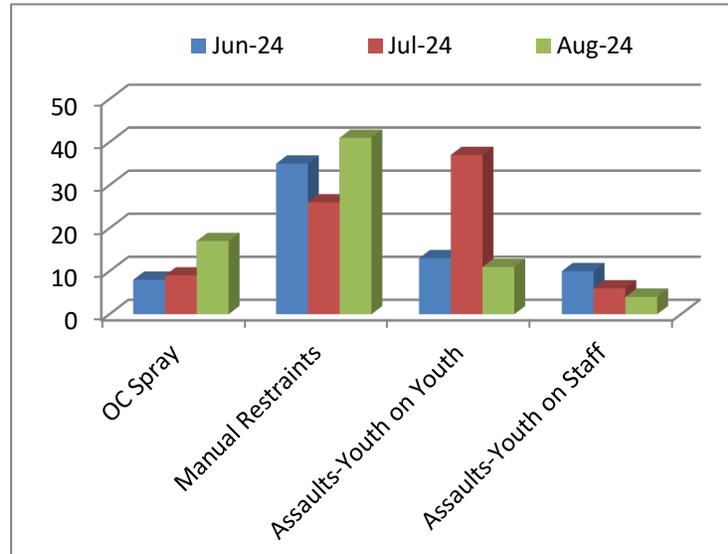
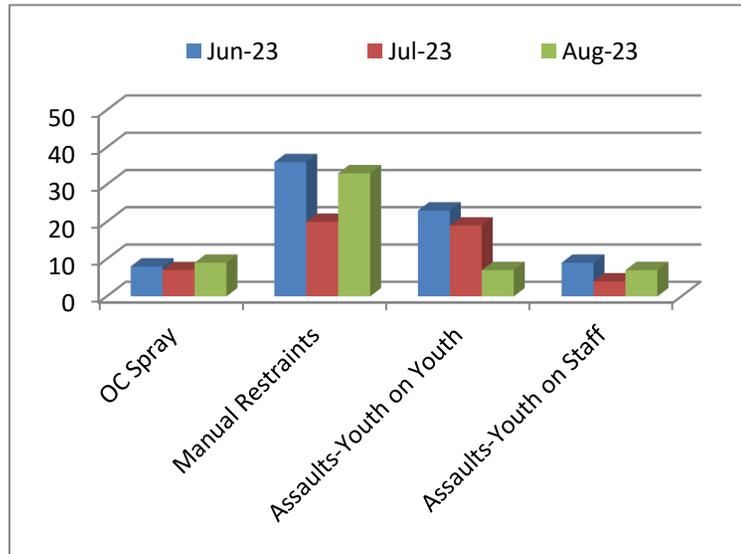
Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
3	5	3
142	99	96
0	6	0
42	26	14



### Ron Jackson SJCC-Orientation and Assessment (Males Only)

	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23
OC Spray	8	7	9
Manual Restraints	36	20	33
Assaults-Youth on Youth	23	19	7
Assaults-Youth on Staff	9	4	7

Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24
8	9	17
35	26	41
13	37	11
10	6	4



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.

Upon review of the operational functioning of the OIO, I issued a directive to the agency that site visits will be conducted with youth that are currently on the waitlist for admission to a TJJD facility. Due to the length of time of admission (approximately 90 plus days) the OIO is directing resources to make sure that services are being provided to these particular youth. This population is technically youth in a post-adjudicated status, that are being housed in pre-adjudicated facilities.

During this reporting period the OIO filled a vacant deputy ombudsman position, and for the first time in several years, is now fully staffed.

R. Sean McCleskey, Chief  
Office of the Independent Ombudsman  
For the Texas Juvenile Justice Department  
1801 N Congress Ave Ste 13.1400  
Austin TX 78701

## **ANNEX**

### **TJJD site visits conducted by IO staff during the fourth 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**

Pegasus School RTC-*Lockhart TX*

#### **Parole**

Region Central

Region East

Region North

## County post-adjudicated facility site visits conducted by IO staff during the fourth 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*  
Bexar County Juvenile Detention Center-*San Antonio TX*  
Brazoria County Juvenile Detention Center, Pre-*Angleton TX*  
Brazoria County Juvenile Detention/Residential Treatment, Post-*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*  
Dr. Jerome McNeil Jr. Detention Center-*Dallas TX*  
Fort Bend County Juvenile Detention Center-*Richmond TX*  
Fort Bend County Juvenile Leadership Academy-*Katy TX*  
Grayson County Post-Adjudication Facility-*Denison TX*  
HOPE Academy-*Tyler TX*  
Harris County Juvenile Detention Center-*Houston 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 Detention Center-*Dickinson TX (Galveston County)*  
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)*  
Judge Mario E Ramirez Jr Juvenile Justice Center (Pre-Adjudication)-*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*  
Lynn W. Ross Juvenile Detention Center-Fort Worth TX (Tarrant County)  
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-*Quinlan TX*  
Arms of Hope-*Medina TX*  
Athletes for Change-*Glenn Heights TX*  
Austin State Hospital-*Austin 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*  
Concho Valley Home for Girls-*San Angelo TX*  
Everyday Life RTC-*Bryan TX*  
Father Flanagan's Boys Home-*Boystown, NE*  
Garza County RJC-*Post TX*  
Gulf Coast Trades Center-*New Waverly TX*  
High Plains Children's Home-*Amarillo TX*  
Hope Home-*Early TX*  
Laurel Ridge Treatment Center-*San Antonio TX*  
Meadowland-Roy Maas Youth Alternatives-*Boerne TX*  
Mesquite Treatment Center-*Lyford 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*  
Rite of Passage-*Queen Creek, AZ*  
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*  
Terrell State Hospital-*Terrell TX*  
West Texas Boys Ranch-*San Angelo TX*  
Woodward Youth Academy-*Woodward, IA*