

Independent Ombudsman

for the

Texas Juvenile Justice Department



First Quarter Report FY 25
September 1, 2024 to November 30, 2024

INTRODUCTION

This is the first Quarterly Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 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 September 2024 through November 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 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, 84th Legislative Session.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During this reporting period, the Office of Independent Ombudsman conducted 98 facility site visits and interviewed 880 youth offenders (Refer to the Annex for a listing of facility site visit locations). During this quarter, the OIO opened six individual cases and closed two. One 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

	1st Quarter FY24	4th Quarter FY24	1st Quarter FY25	FY25 Total
TJJD/Contract Site Visits	28	25	22	22
County Post Adjudicated/Contract Facility Site Visits	70	79	76	76
Number of Youth Interviewed	768	866	880	880
Number of Youth Interviews Conducted	904	999	1042	1042
Closed Individual Cases	3	1	2	2

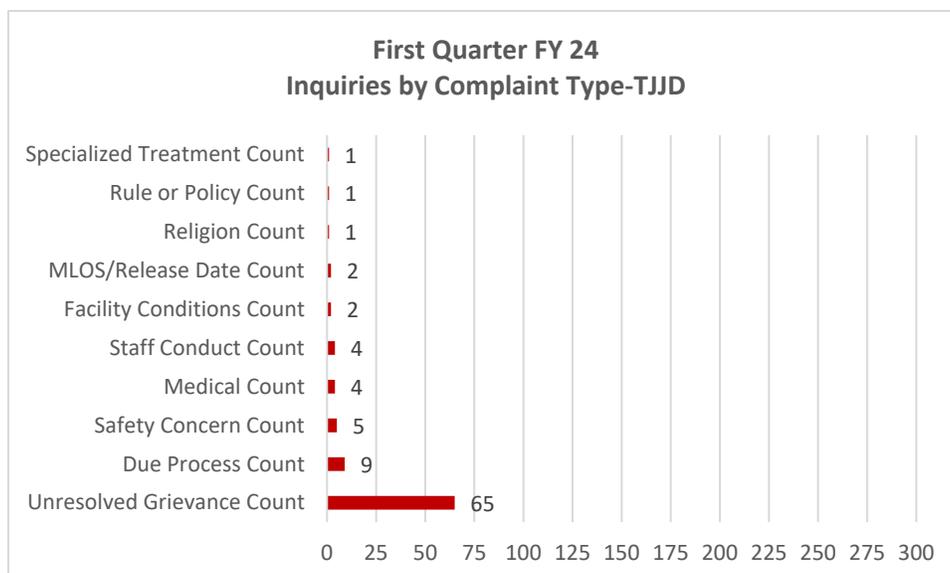
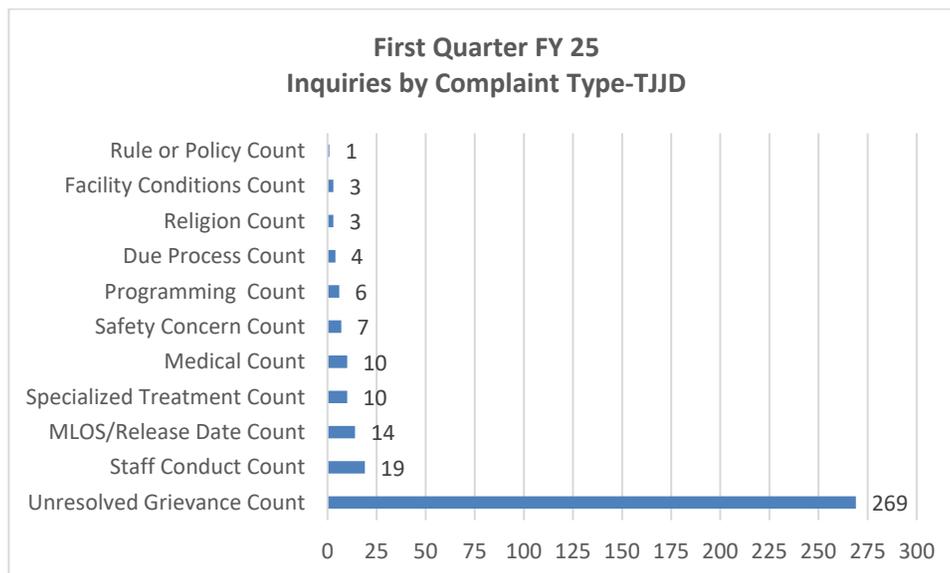
Inquiries

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.

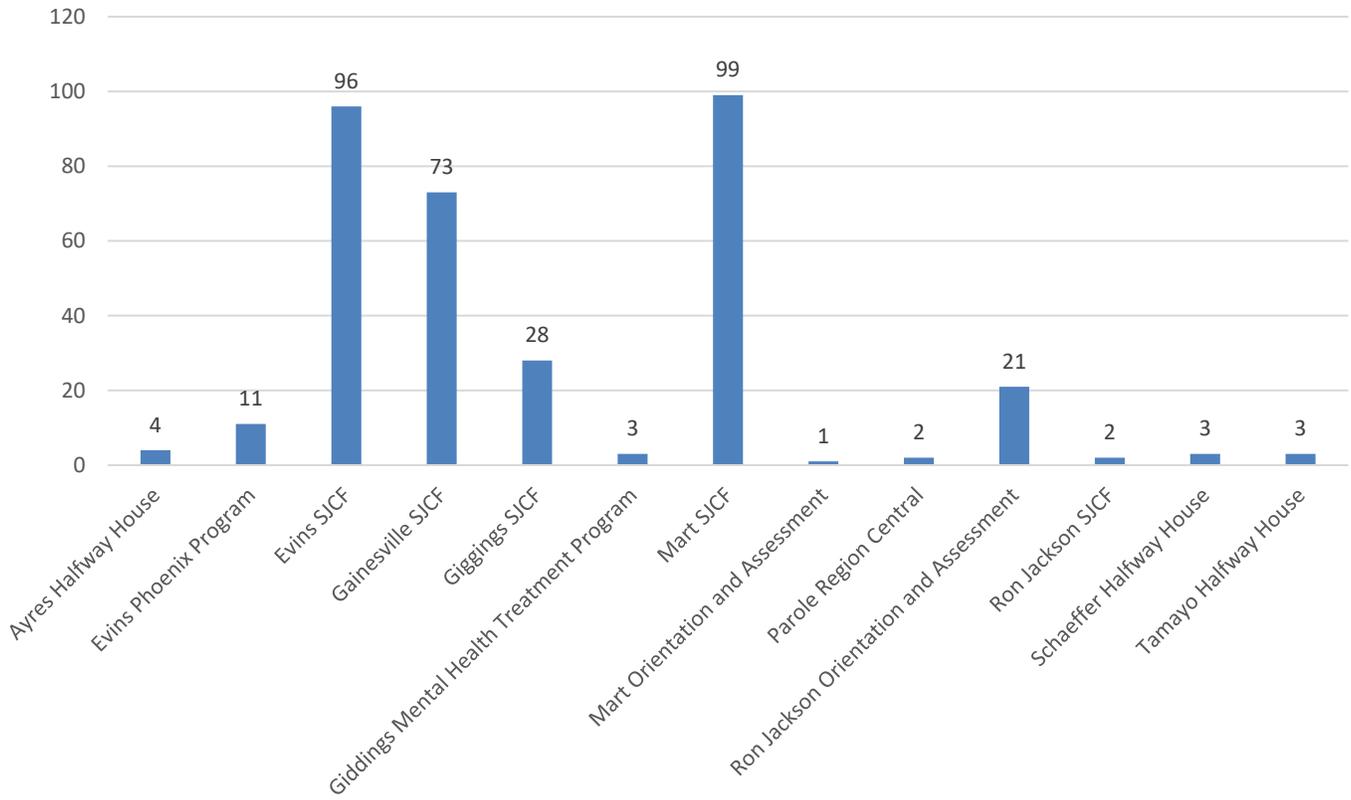
The OIO received 351 inquiries during the first quarter of FY 25, 346 related to TJJD and five related to county post-adjudicated facilities. When compared to the first quarter of FY 24, this represents an increase of 222%.

Inquiries TJJD

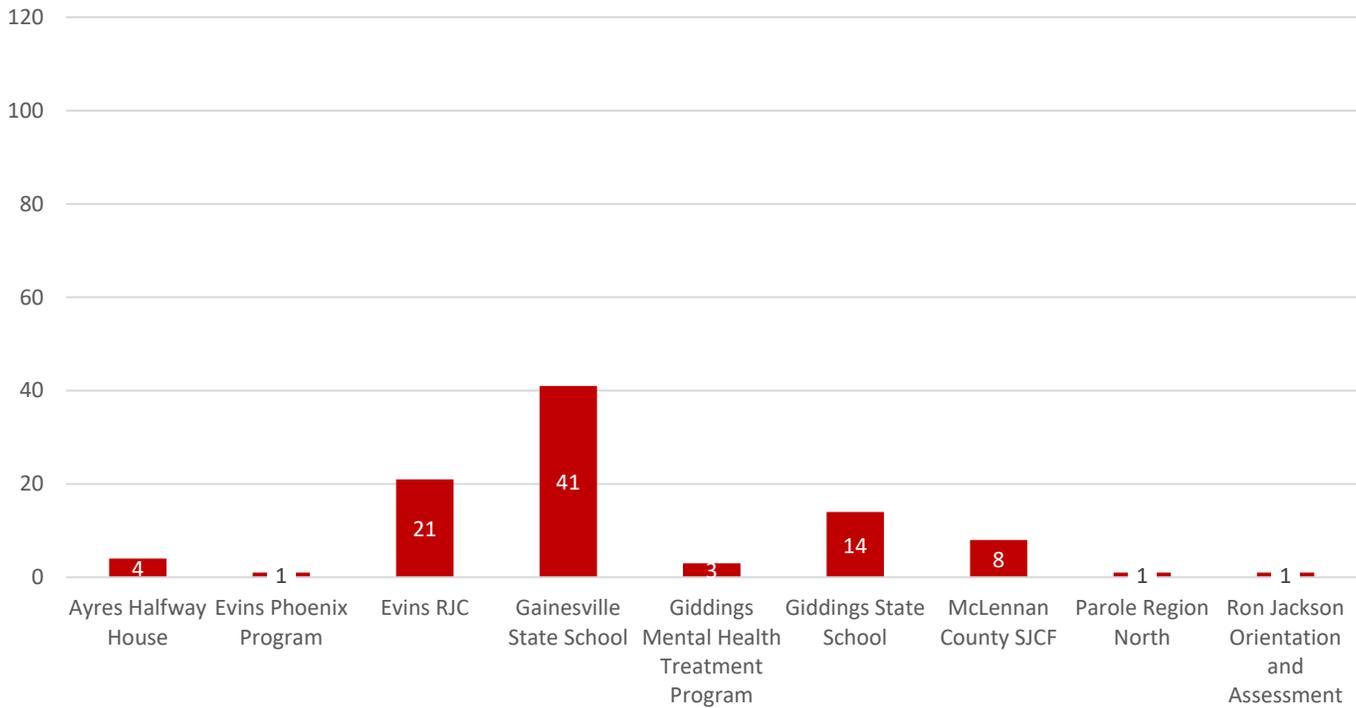
Of the 351 complaints received during the first quarter, 346 were Inquiries related to TJJD youth.



**First Quarter FY 25
Inquiries by Facility-TJJD**

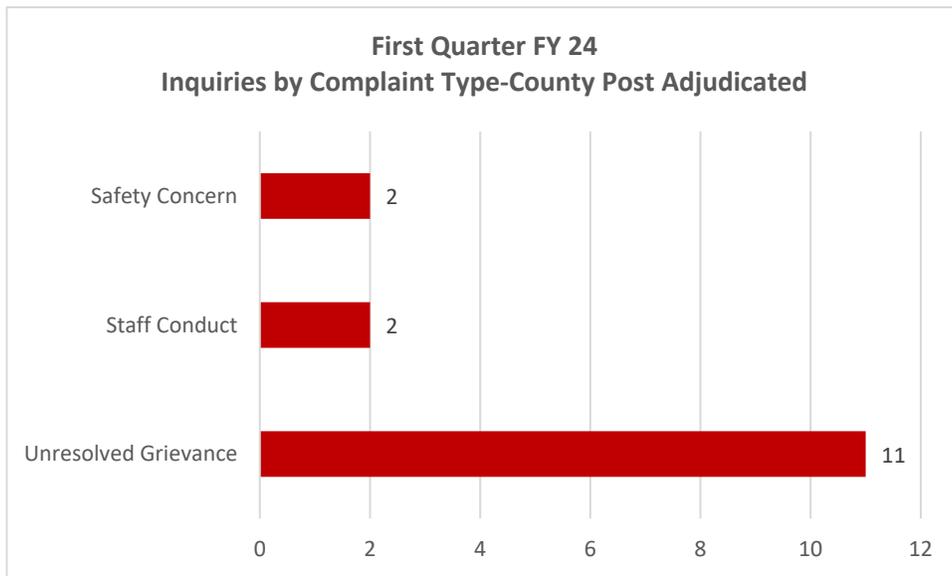
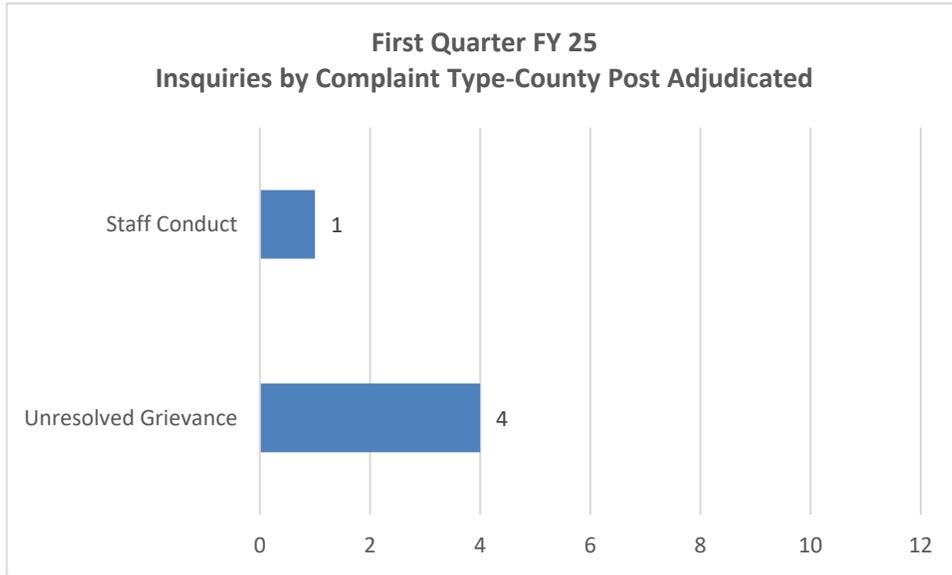


**First Quarter FY 24
Inquiries by Facility-TJJD**



Inquiries-County

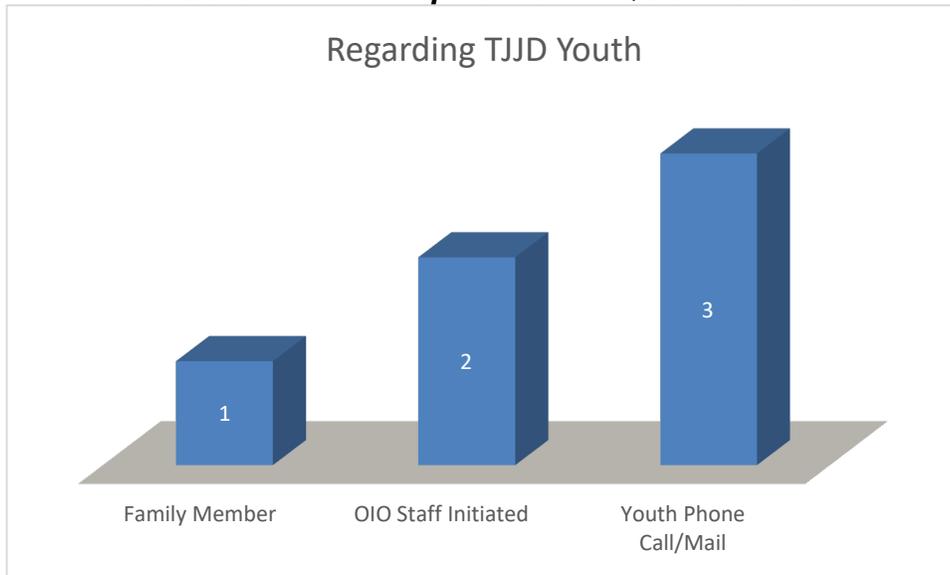
Of the 351 complaints received during the first quarter of FY 25, five were Inquiries related to County post-adjudicated youth



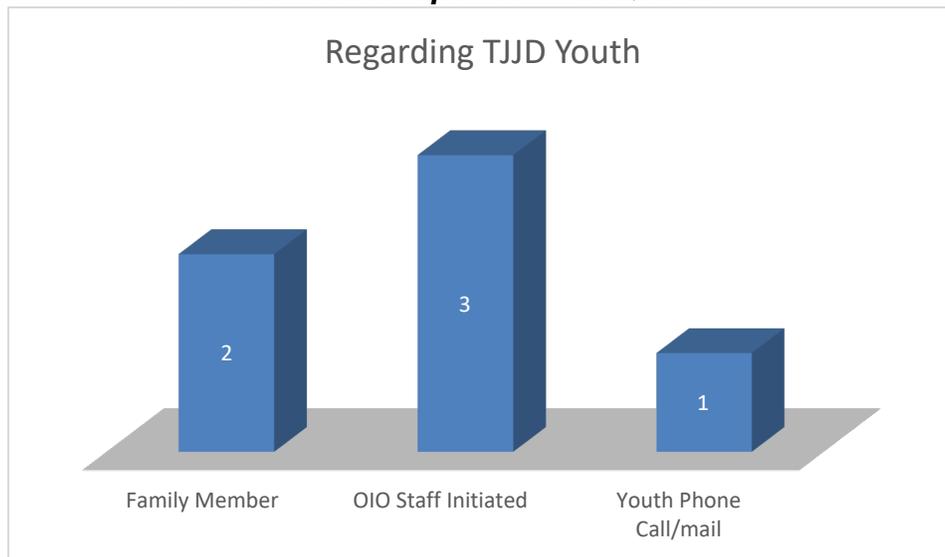
Individual Cases

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 first quarter of FY 25, the OIO opened six complaints as individual cases, all involving TJJD youth.

Individual Cases Opened-First Quarter FY 25



Individual Cases Opened-First Quarter FY 24



Individual Cases by Facility-First Quarter FY 25

	Total For Facility	Programming	Safety Concern	Unresolved Grievance
TJJD/Contract Facilities				
Giddings SJCF	1	1	0	0
Mart SJCF	5	0	3	2

Individual Cases by Facility-First Quarter FY 24

	Total For Facility	Programming	Safety Concern	Unresolved Grievance
TJJD/Contract Facilities				
Evins RJC	1	0	0	1
Giddings State School	2	2	0	0
McLennan County SJCF	3	1	1	1

Closed Individual Cases

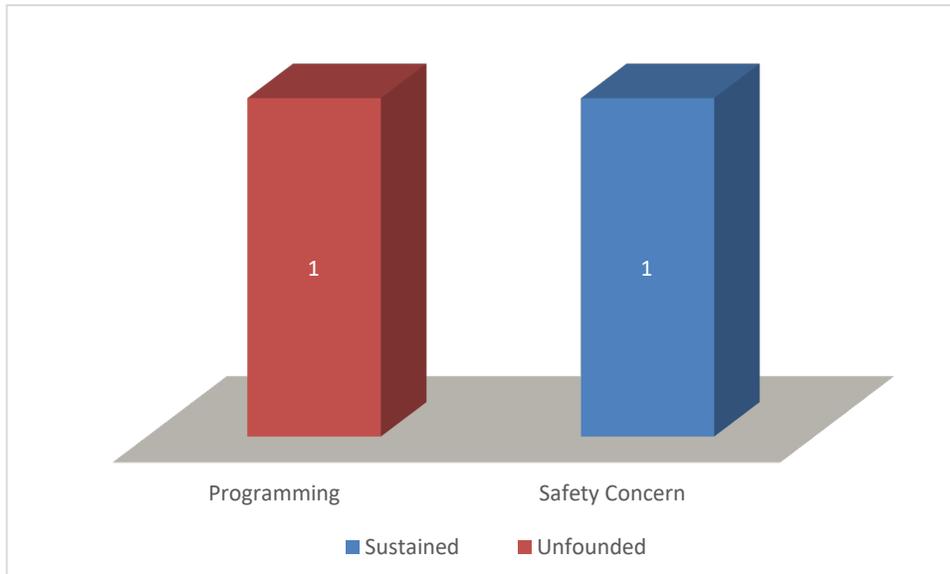
The OIO closed two individual cases during the first quarter of FY 25, both involving TJJD youth.

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

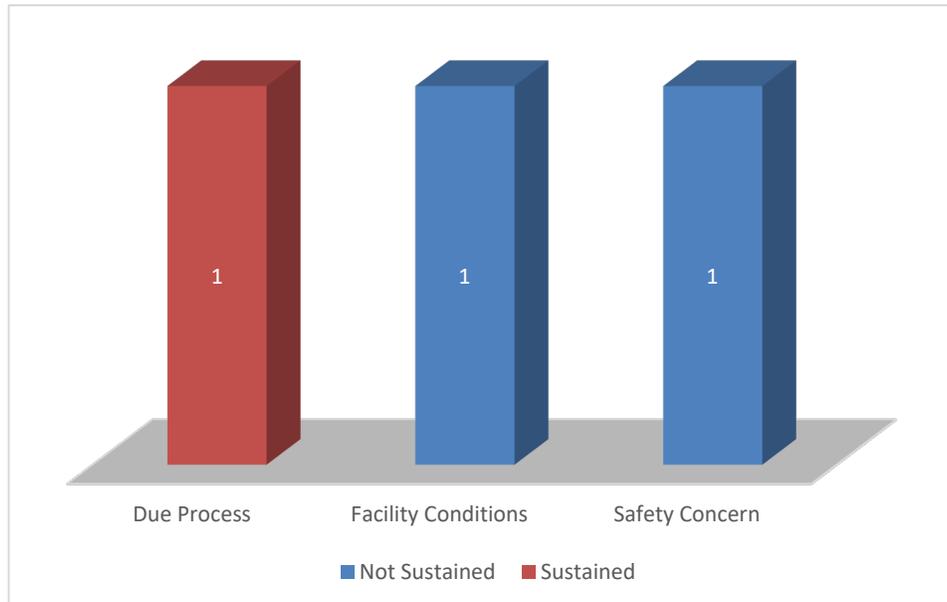
Not Sustained-There is insufficient information or evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.

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

Individual Case Type & Disposition-First Quarter FY 25



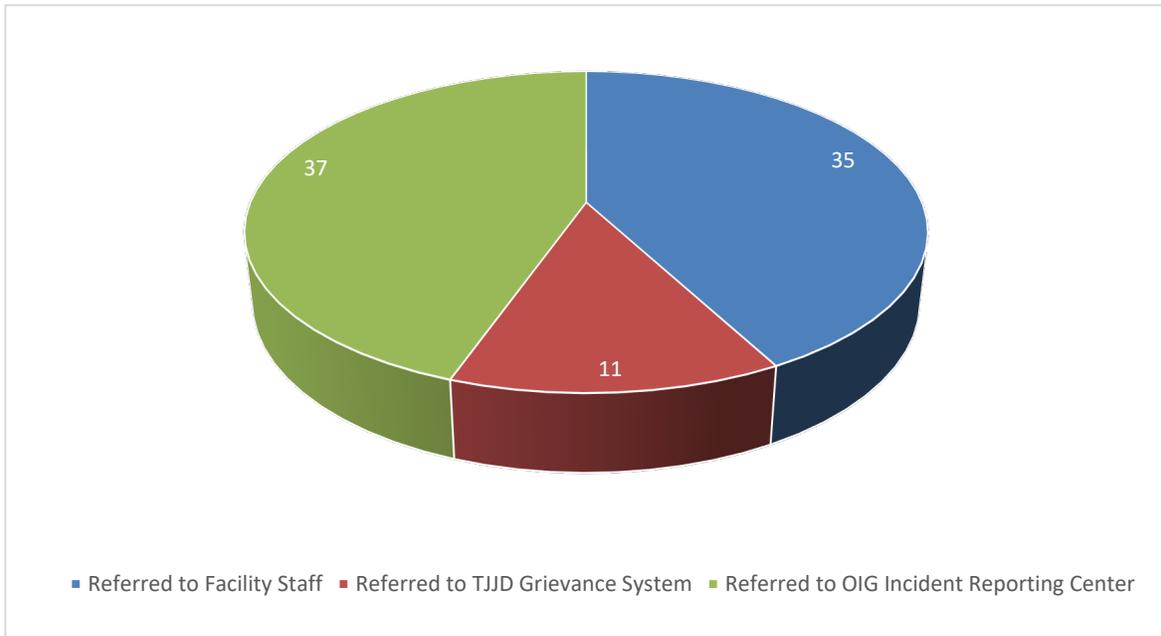
Individual Case Type & Disposition-First Quarter FY 24



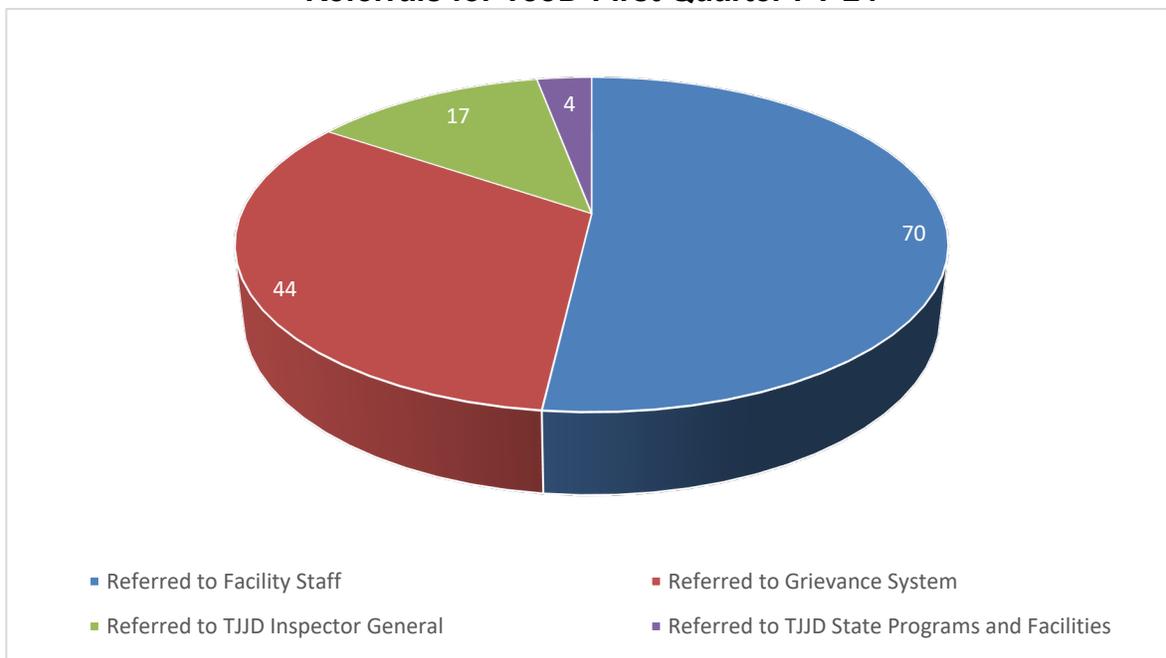
Referrals

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 first quarter of FY 25, the OIO received 91 referrals, 83 related to TJJJ youth and eight related to county post adjudicated youth. This is a decrease of 46% from the first quarter of FY 24.

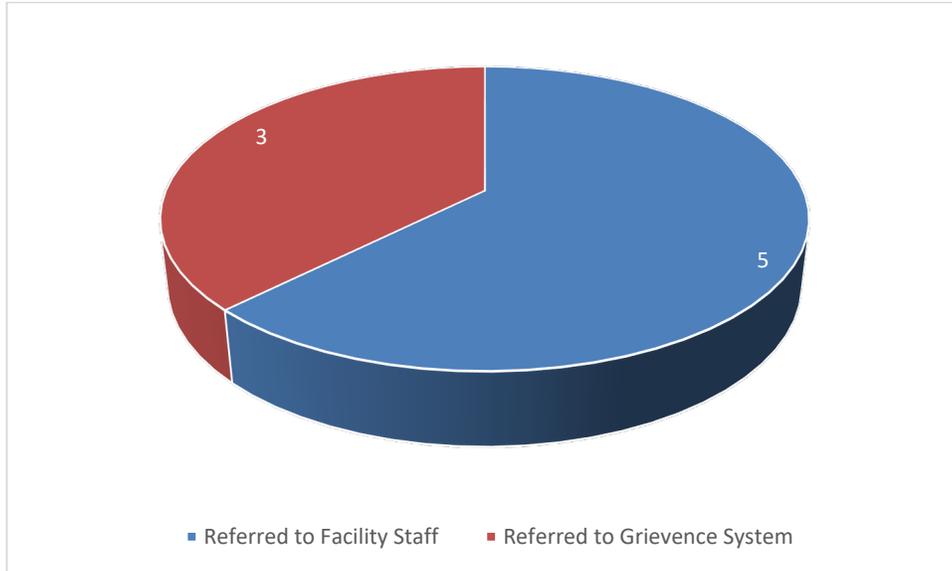
Referrals for TJJJ-First Quarter FY 25



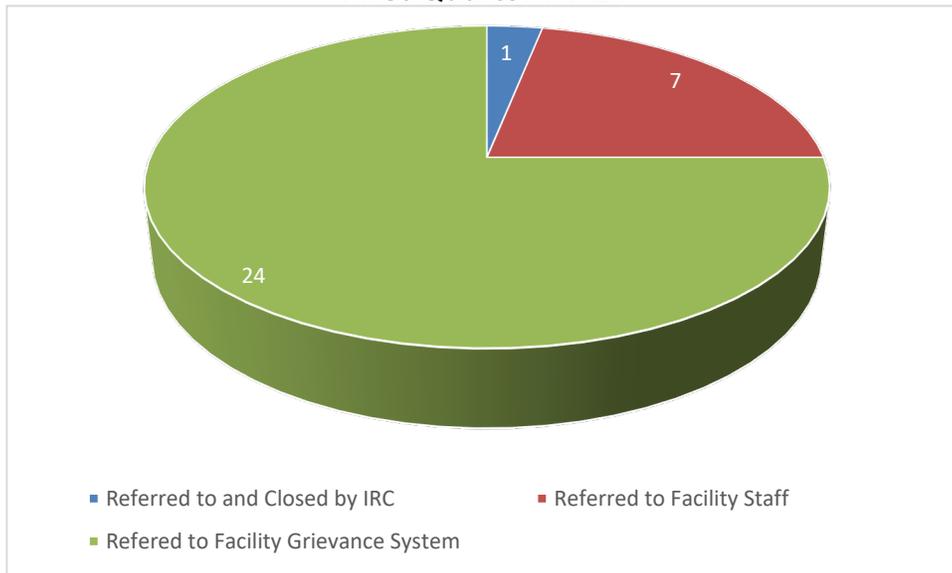
Referrals for TJJJ-First Quarter FY 24



Referrals for County Post-Adjudicated Facilities First Quarter FY 25



Referrals for County Post-Adjudicated Facilities First Quarter FY 24



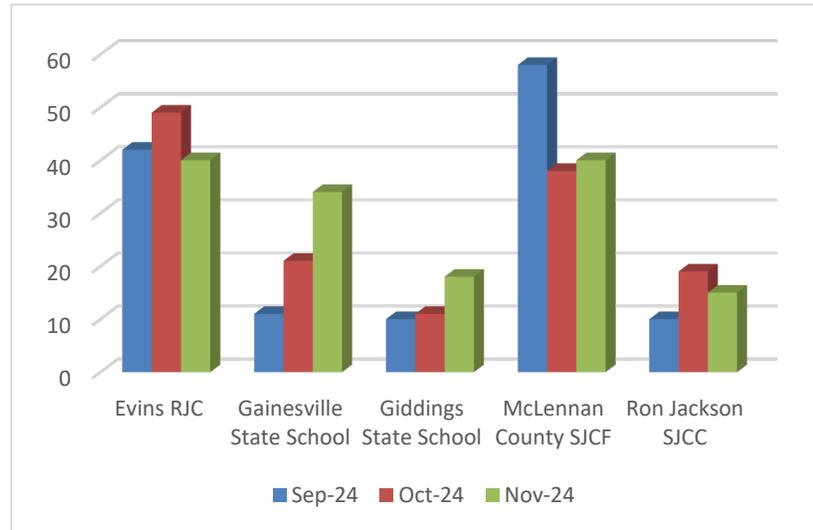
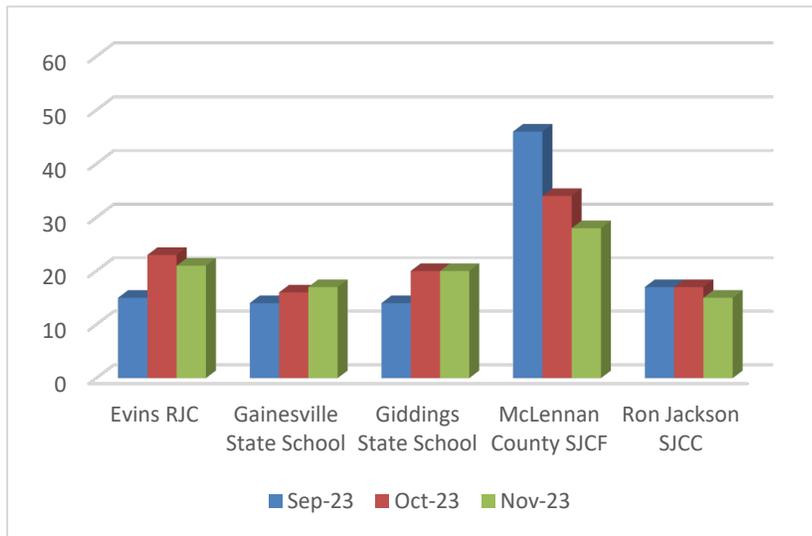
INCIDENT TRENDS FOR TJJD SECURE FACILITIES

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.

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
Evins RJC	15	23	21
Gainesville State School	14	16	17
Giddings State School	14	20	20
McLennan County SJCF	46	34	28
Ron Jackson SJCC	17	17	15

	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
	42	49	40
	11	21	34
	10	11	18
	58	38	40
	10	19	15

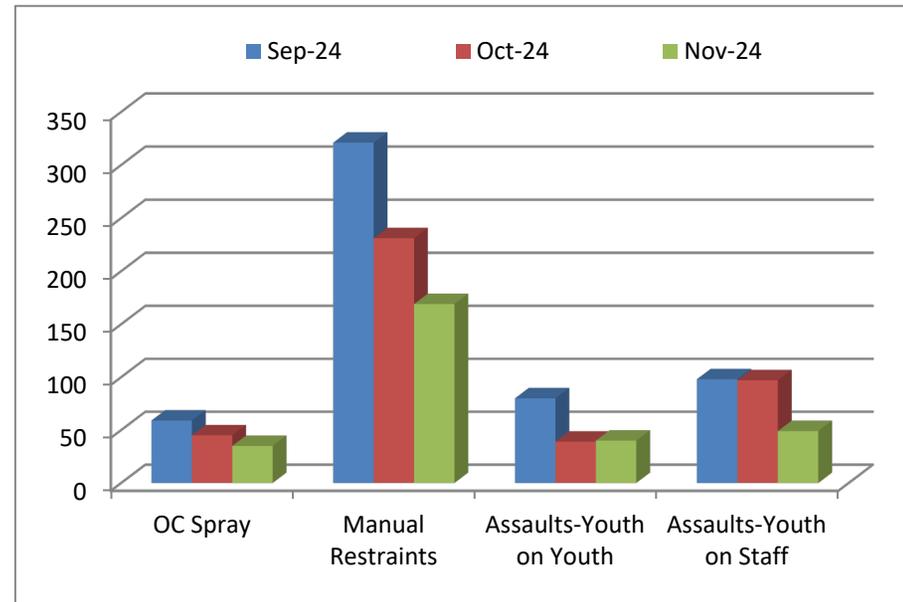
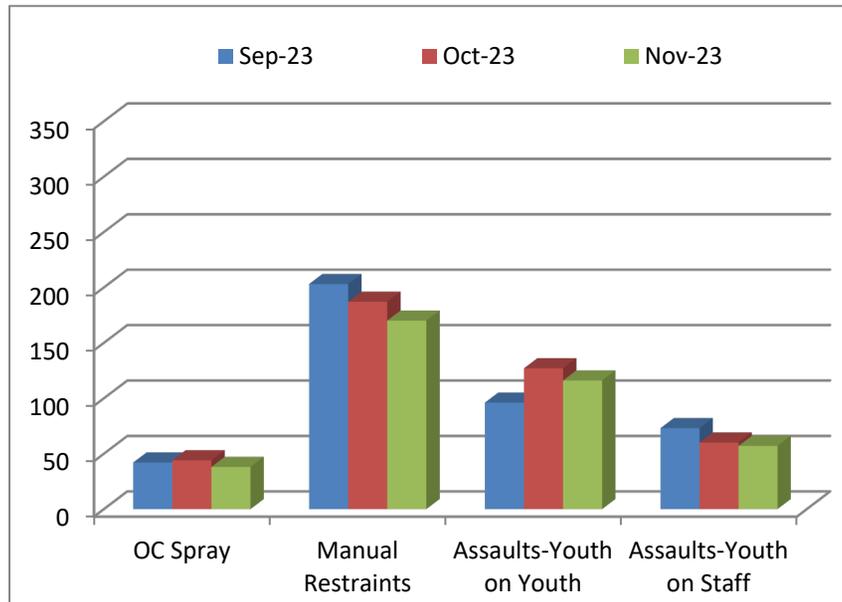


The OIO reviews on a monthly basis at the secure correctional facilities the number of incidents involving the use of OC pepper spray, the number of youth restrained, and assaults involving youth on youth and youth on staff. These metrics give the OIO some indication of the environment related to the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

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	42	44	38
Manual Restraints	203	187	170
Assaults-Youth on Youth	96	127	116
Assaults-Youth on Staff	73	60	57

	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
OC Spray	59	45	35
Manual Restraints	321	231	169
Assaults-Youth on Youth	80	39	40
Assaults-Youth on Staff	98	97	49

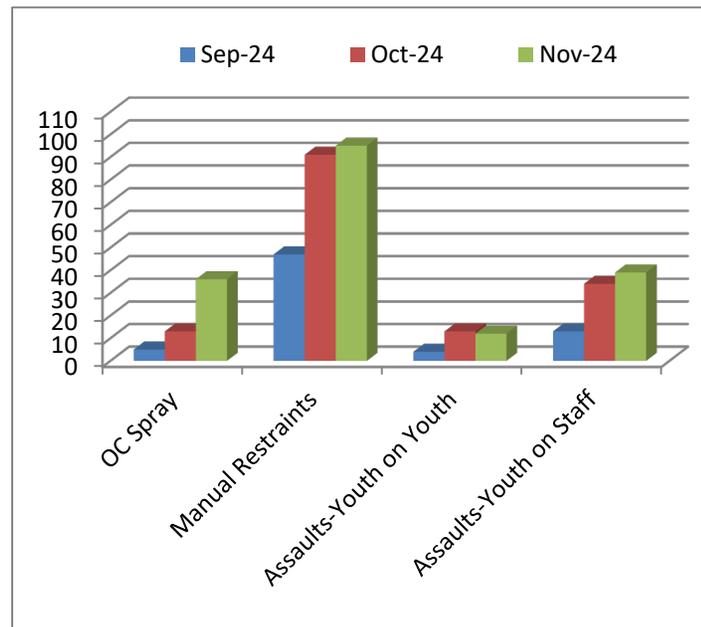
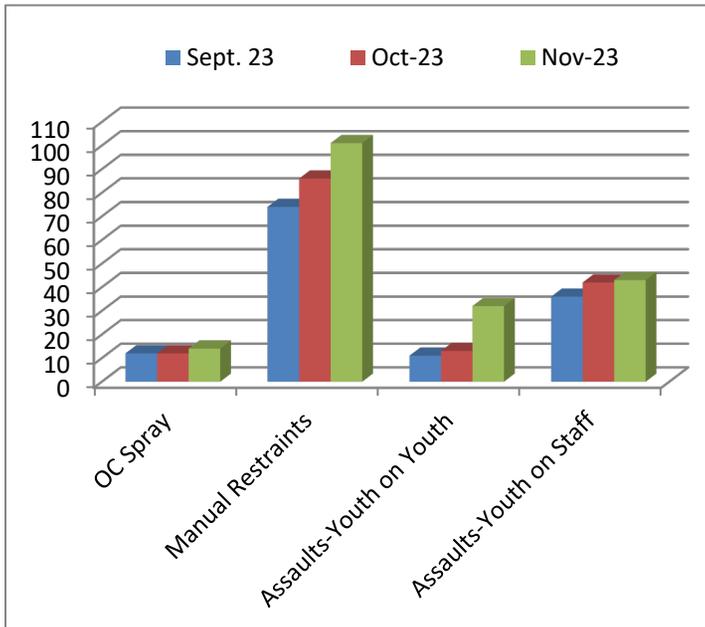


Evins Phoenix Program

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.

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	12	12	14
Manual Restraints	74	86	101
Assaults-Youth on Youth	11	13	32
Assaults-Youth on Staff	36	42	43

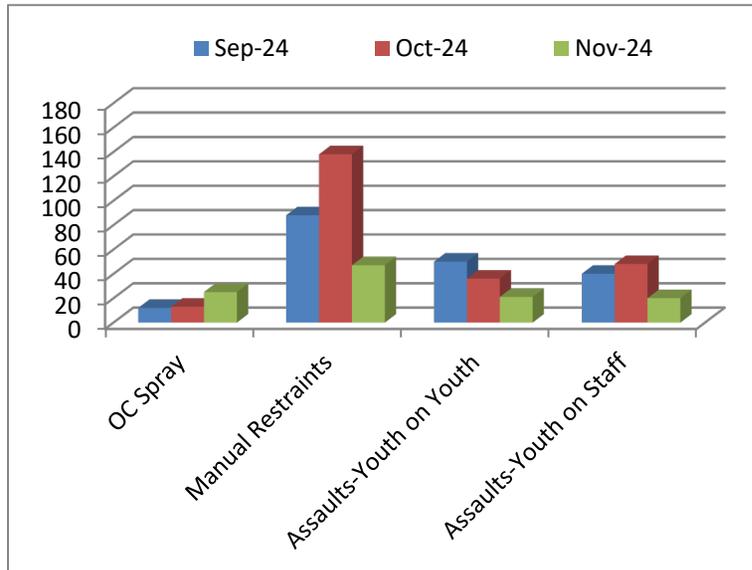
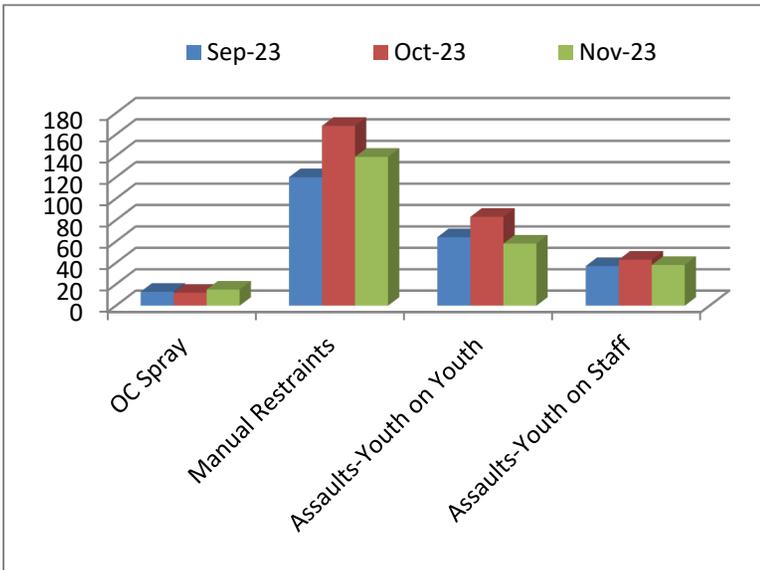
Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
5	13	36
47	91	95
4	13	12
13	34	39



Gainesville State School

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	13	12	15
Manual Restraints	120	168	139
Assaults-Youth on Youth	64	83	58
Assaults-Youth on Staff	37	43	38

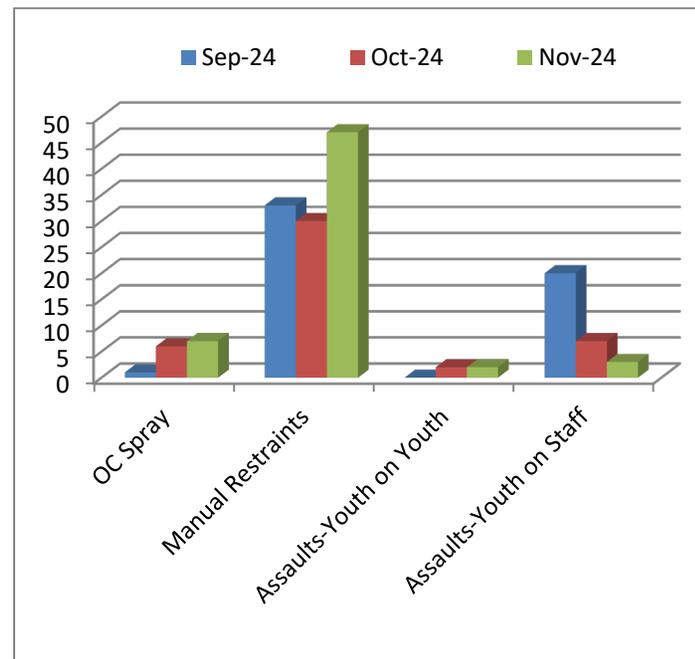
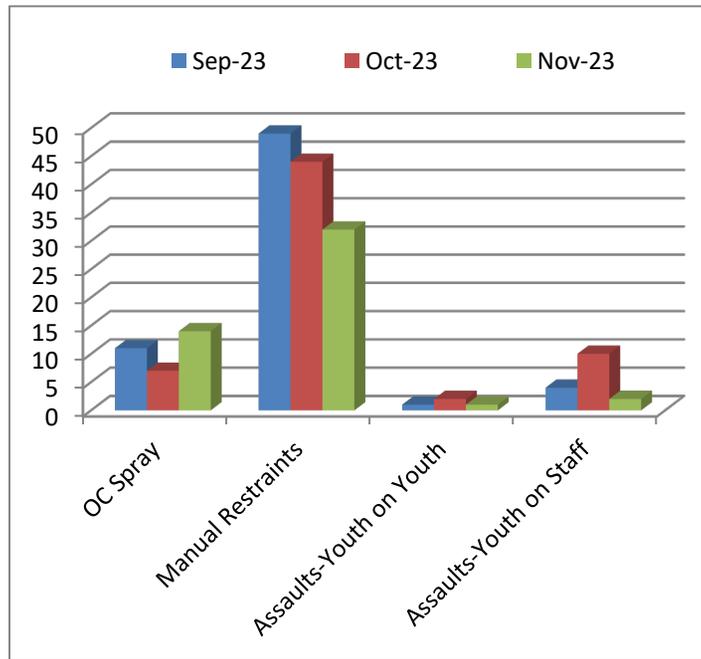
	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
OC Spray	12	13	25
Manual Restraints	88	138	47
Assaults-Youth on Youth	50	36	21
Assaults-Youth on Staff	40	48	20



Giddings State School

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	11	7	14
Manual Restraints	49	44	32
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	2	1
Assaults-Youth on Staff	4	10	2

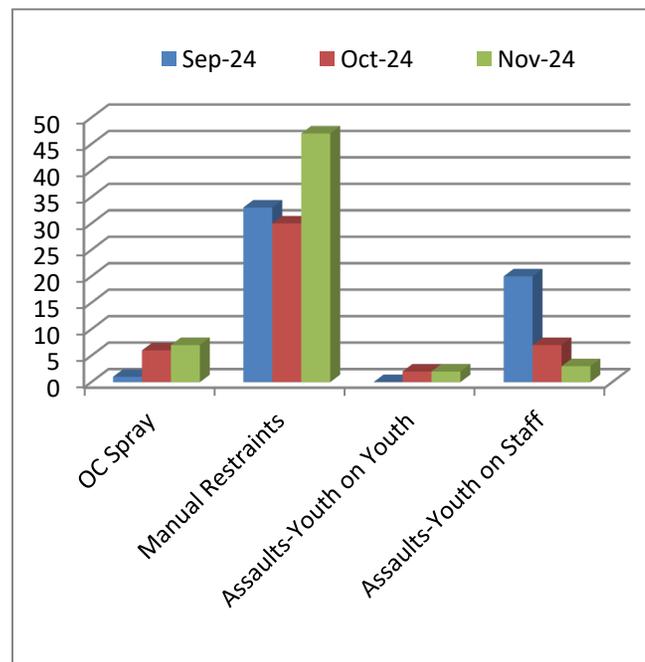
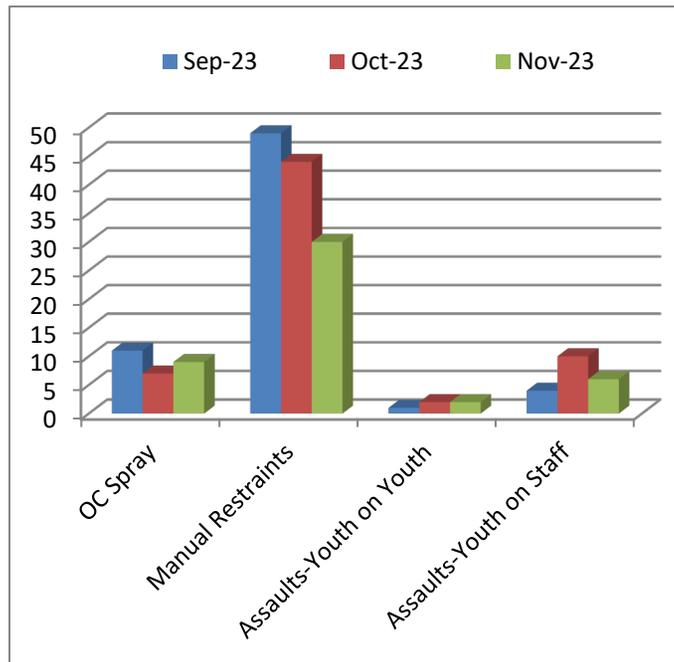
Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
1	6	9
33	30	28
0	2	1
10	7	2



Giddings Mental Health Program

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	11	7	9
Manual Restraints	49	44	30
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	2	2
Assaults-Youth on Staff	4	10	6

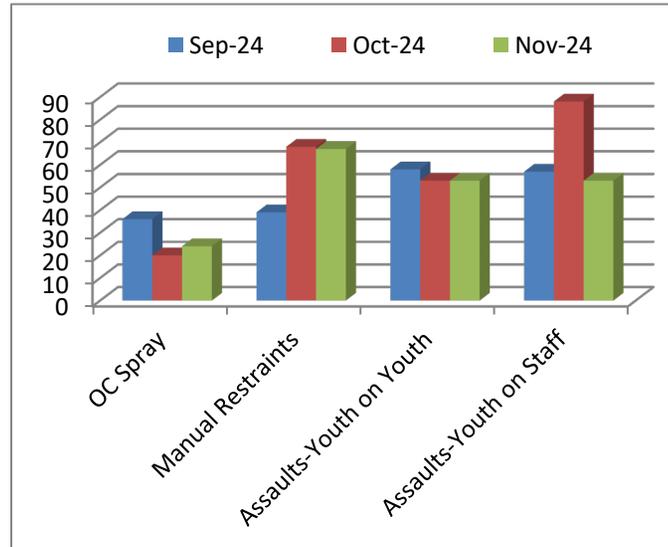
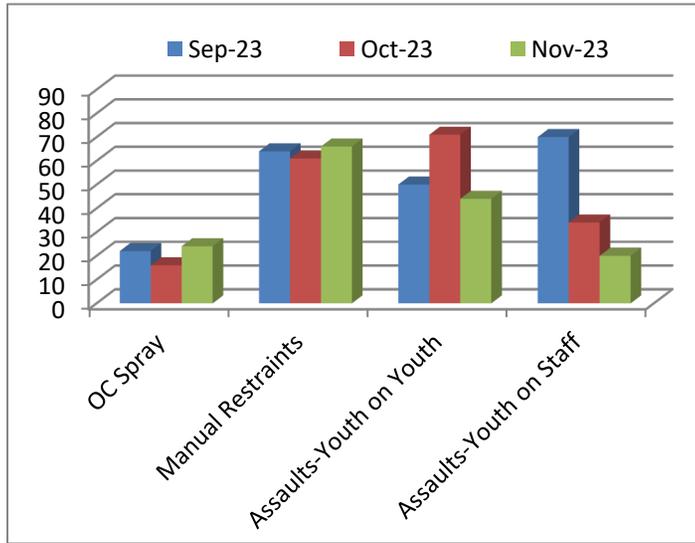
	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
OC Spray	1	6	7
Manual Restraints	33	30	47
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	2	2
Assaults-Youth on Staff	20	7	3



McLennan County SJCF

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	22	16	24
Manual Restraints	64	61	66
Assaults-Youth on Youth	50	71	44
Assaults-Youth on Staff	70	34	20

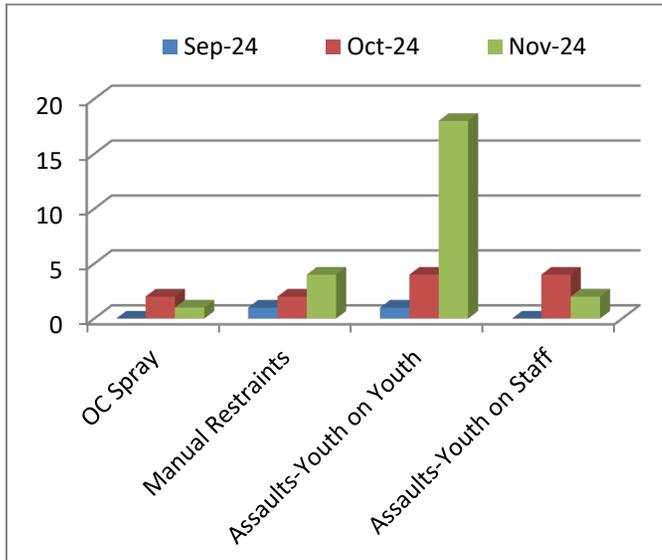
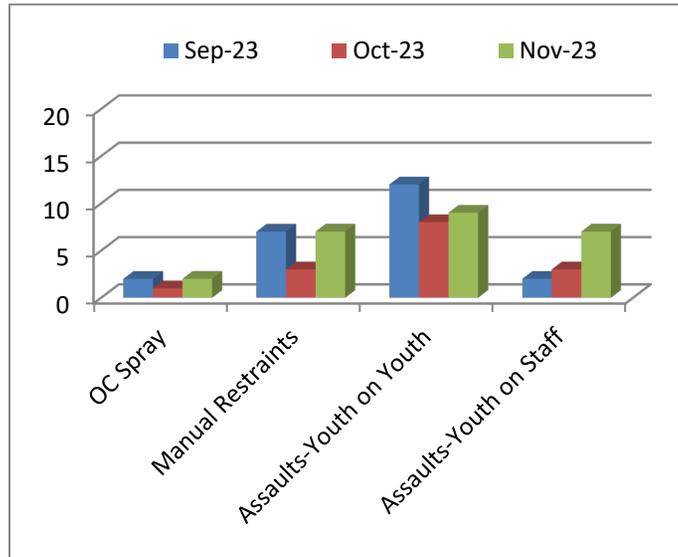
Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
36	20	24
39	68	67
58	53	53
57	88	53



McLennan County SJCF-Young Male Program

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	2	1	2
Manual Restraints	7	3	7
Assaults-Youth on Youth	12	8	9
Assaults-Youth on Staff	2	3	7

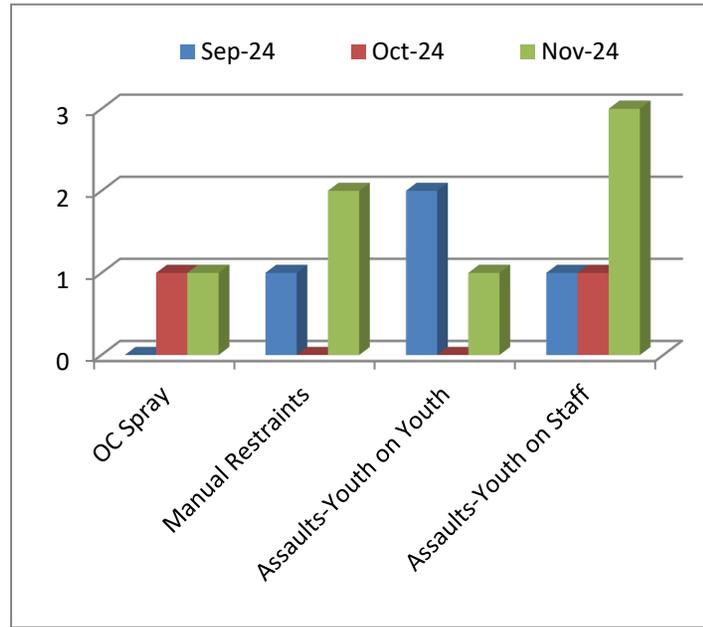
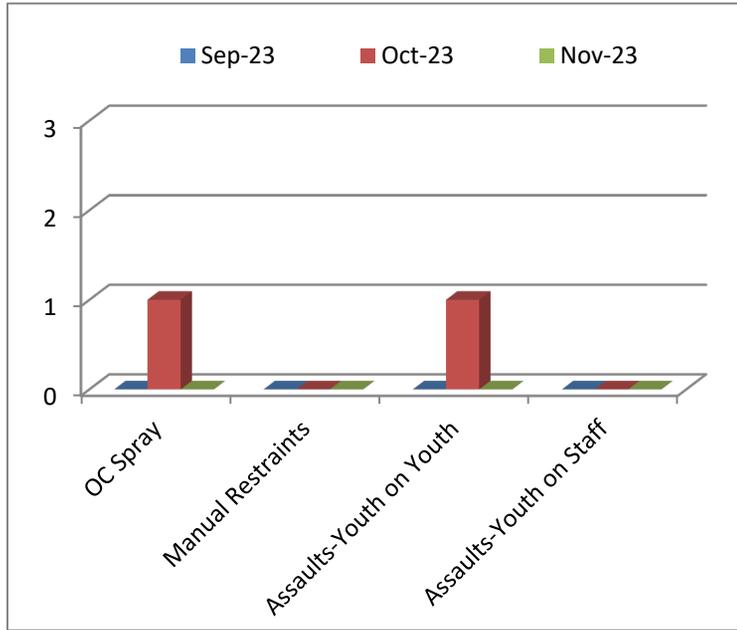
Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
0	2	1
1	2	4
1	4	18
0	4	2



McLennan County SJCF-Orientation and Assessment (Females Only)

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	0	1	0
Manual Restraints	0	0	0
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	1	0
Assaults-Youth on Staff	0	0	0

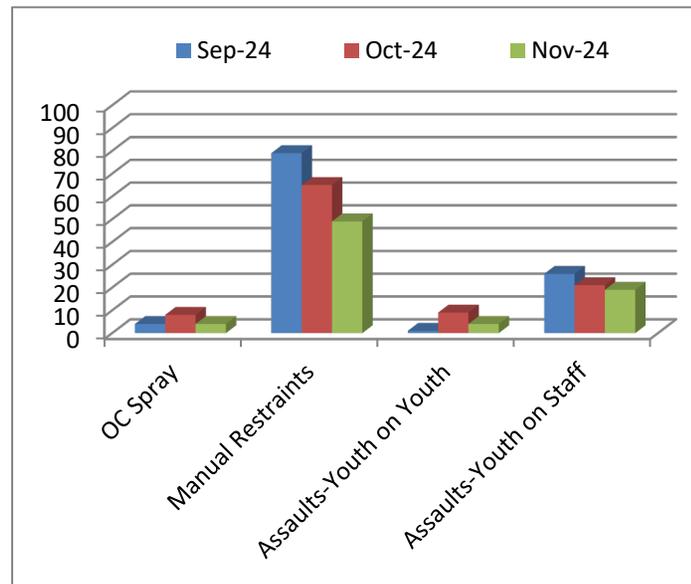
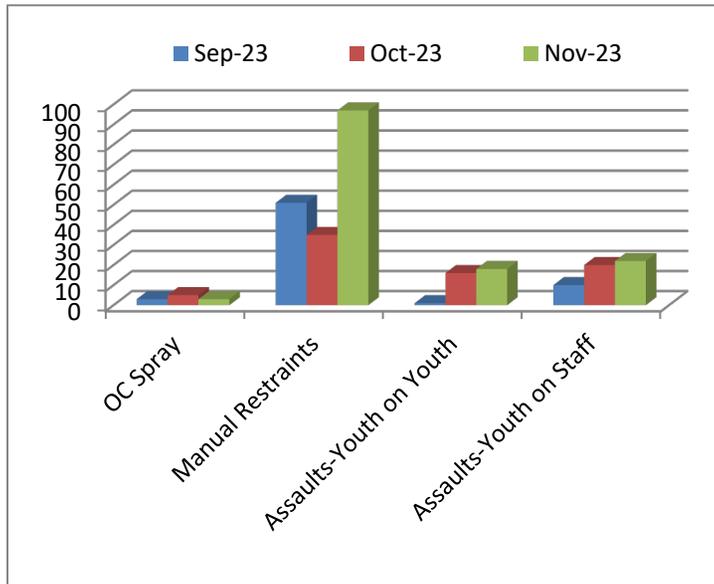
Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
0	1	1
1	0	2
2	0	1
1	1	3



Ron Jackson SJCC

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	3	5	3
Manual Restraints	51	35	97
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	16	18
Assaults-Youth on Staff	10	20	22

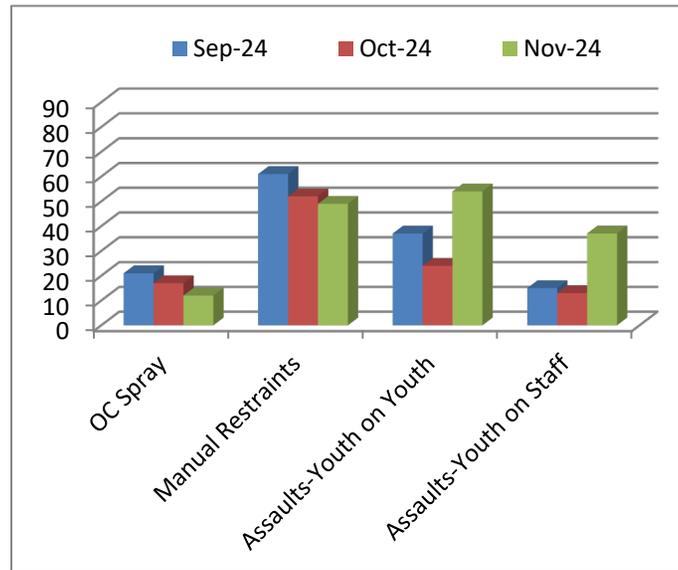
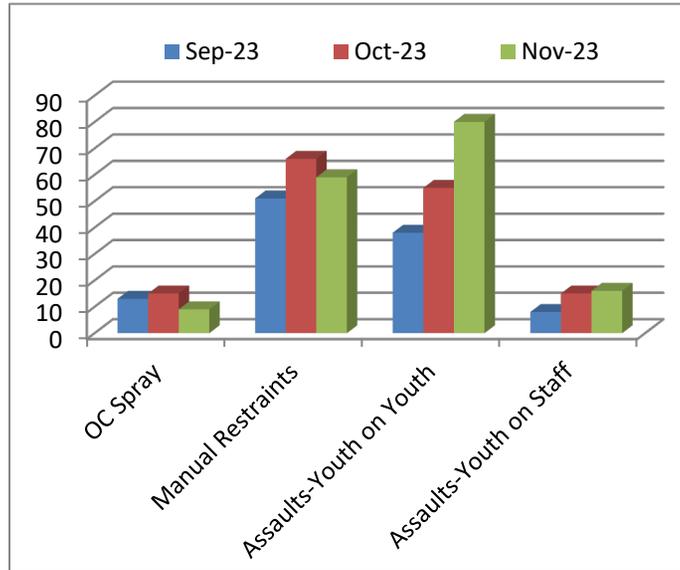
Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
4	8	4
79	65	49
1	9	4
26	21	19



Ron Jackson SJCC-Orientation and Assessment (Males Only)

	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC Spray	13	15	9
Manual Restraints	51	66	59
Assaults-Youth on Youth	38	55	80
Assaults-Youth on Staff	8	15	16

Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24
21	17	12
61	52	49
37	24	54
15	13	37



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 can potentially lead to staff fatigue and possibly decreased supervision of youth offenders within the State secure facilities.

During this reporting period, I continued the evaluation of the operational functioning of the OIO, and through that examination came to the determination that the agency's Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) for 2026/2027, which was filed in August 2024, was imperative to the success of our mission. The requests that were filed in LAR 2026/2027 were as follows:

1. A data analyst-The OIO has been tasked with identifying systemic issues within TJJD, but does not currently have the personnel trained in data collection and analysis to perform that function.
2. Three Additional Senior Ombudsman-TJJD has five (5) Secured state facilities and three (3) half-way houses that the OIO is responsible for, as well as over 160 county facilities. Currently, the OIO has three (3) Senior Ombudsman and seven (7) Deputy Ombudsman to cover all of the above. The additional three (3) Senior Ombudsman would allow for all of the five (5) secured facilities to have a senior assigned on a permanent basis, as well as a senior whose primary responsibility is programming/education. *The original LAR request for two (2) additional Senior Ombudsman was amended to three (3) to account for staffing in the five (5) secured facilities.*

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 first 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*

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/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*
El Paso County Juvenile Detention Center-*El Paso TX*
Fort Bend County Juvenile Detention Center-*Richmond TX*
Fort Bend County Juvenile Leadership Academy-*Katy TX*
Gardner-Betts Juvenile Justice Center-*Austin TX (Travis County)*
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 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*
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*
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*
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*
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*
Terrell State Hospital-*Terrell TX*
West Texas Boys Ranch-*San Angelo TX*