

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



Second Quarter Report FY 25

December 1, 2024 to February 28, 2025

INTRODUCTION

This is the second 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 December 2024 through February 2025. 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 Ombudsmen 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

	2nd Quarter FY24	1st Quarter FY25	2nd Quarter FY25	FY25 Total
TJJD/Contract Site Visits	26	22	23	45
County Post Adjudicated/Contract Facility Site Visits	74	76	78	154
Number of Youth Interviewed	737	880	846	1726
Number of Youth Interviews Conducted	842	1042	988	2030
Closed Individual Cases	4	2	7	9

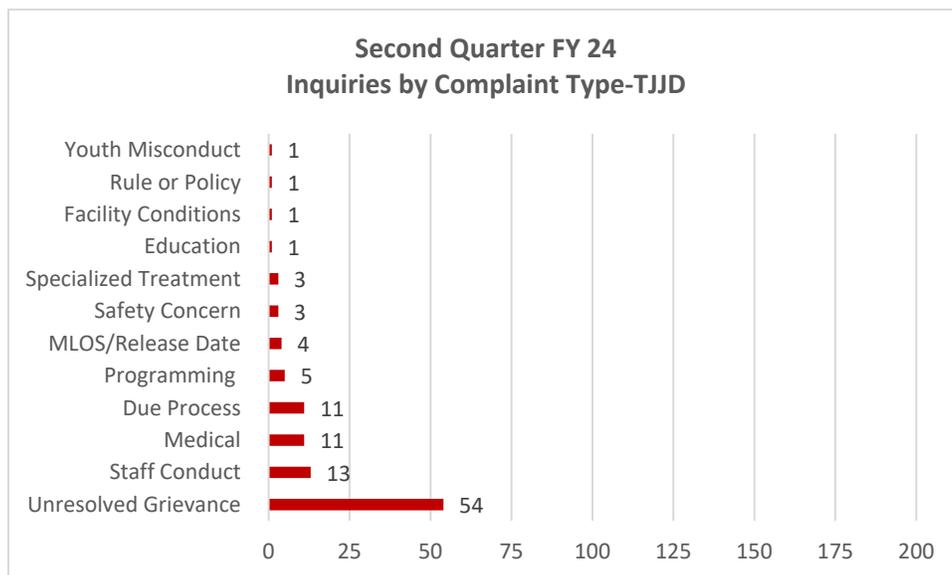
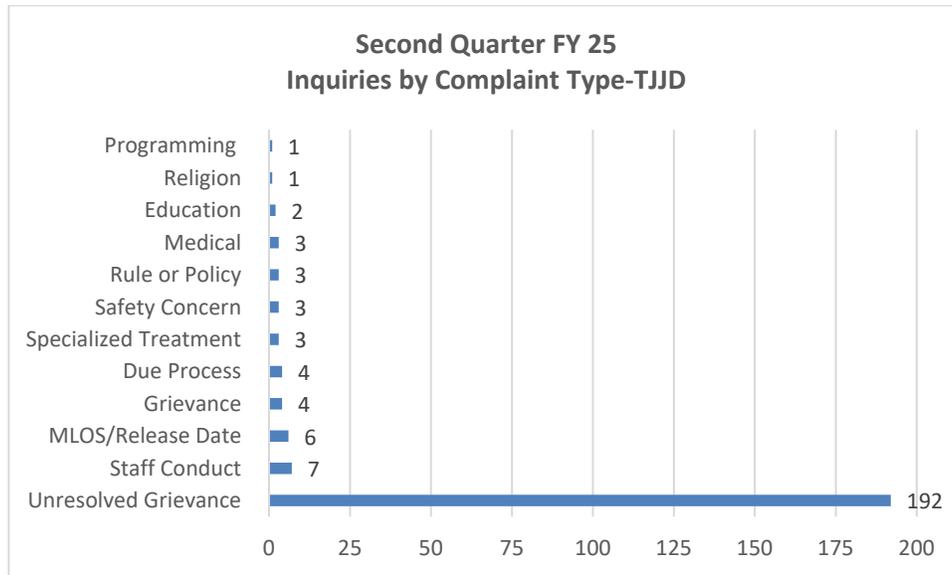
Inquiries

An inquiry is a review of potential youth rights violations 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.

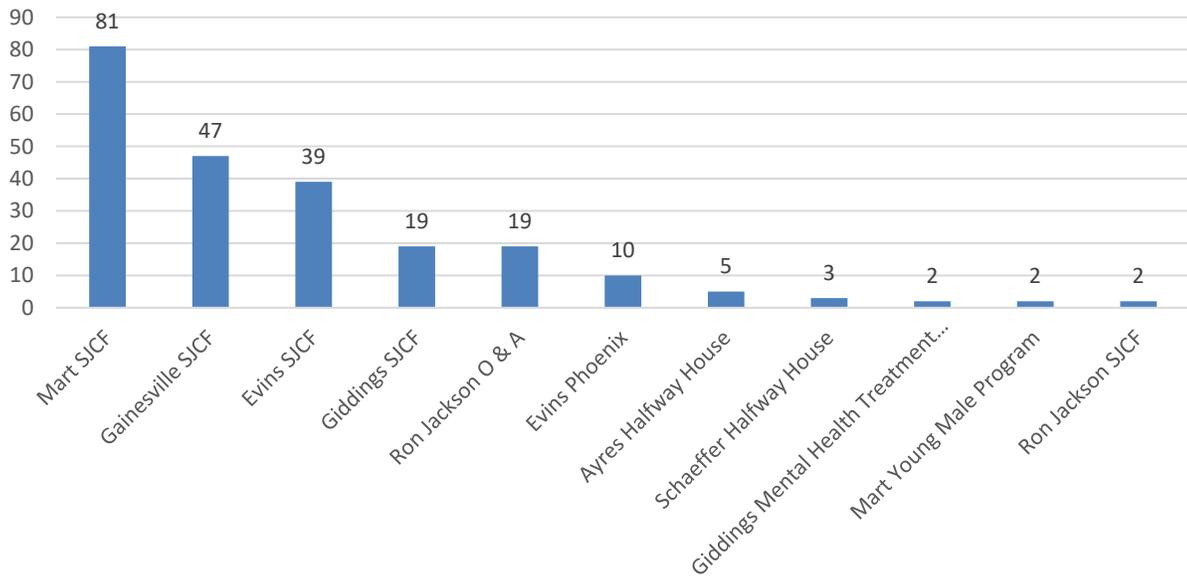
The OIO received 230 complaints during the second quarter of FY 25, 229 related to TJJD and one related to county post-adjudicated facilities. This represents a 98% increase compared to the second quarter of FY 24.

Inquiries TJJD

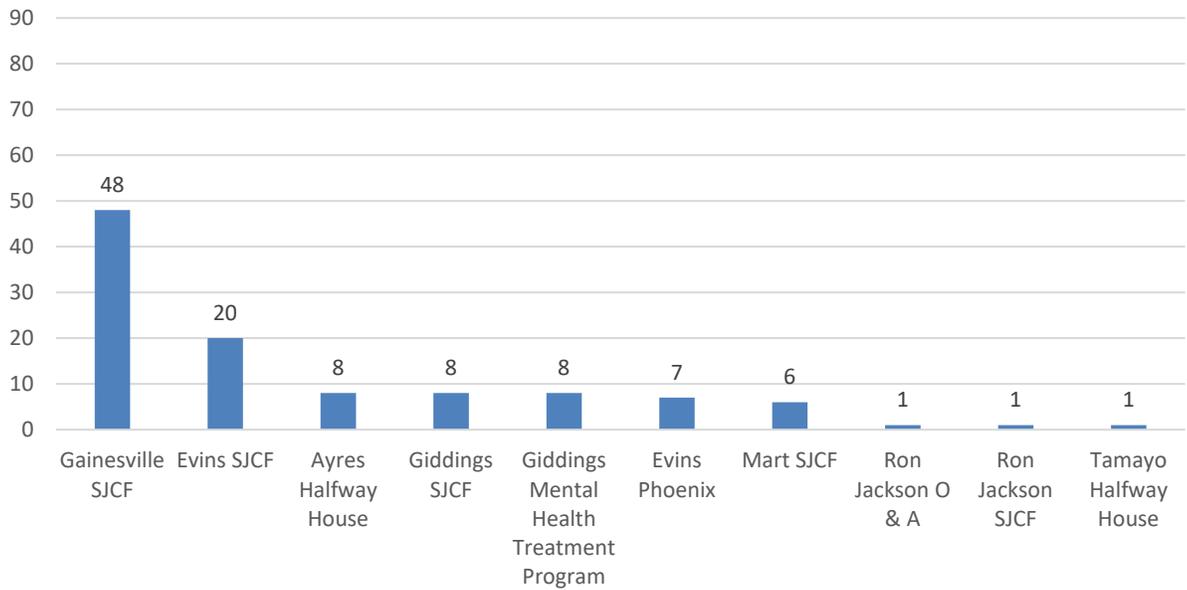
Of the 230 complaints received during the second quarter, 229 were Inquiries related to TJJD youth.



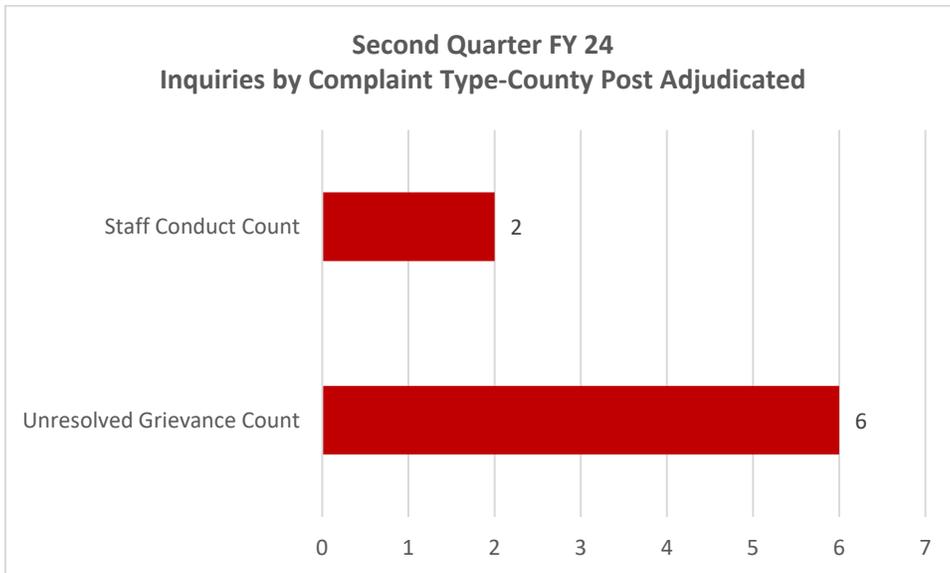
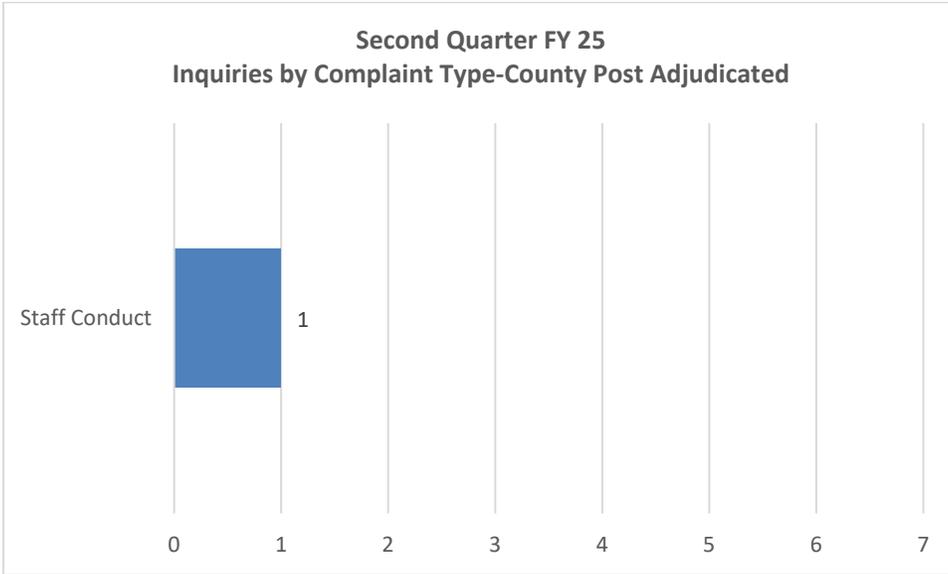
**Second Quarter FY 25
Inquiries by Facility-TJJD**



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

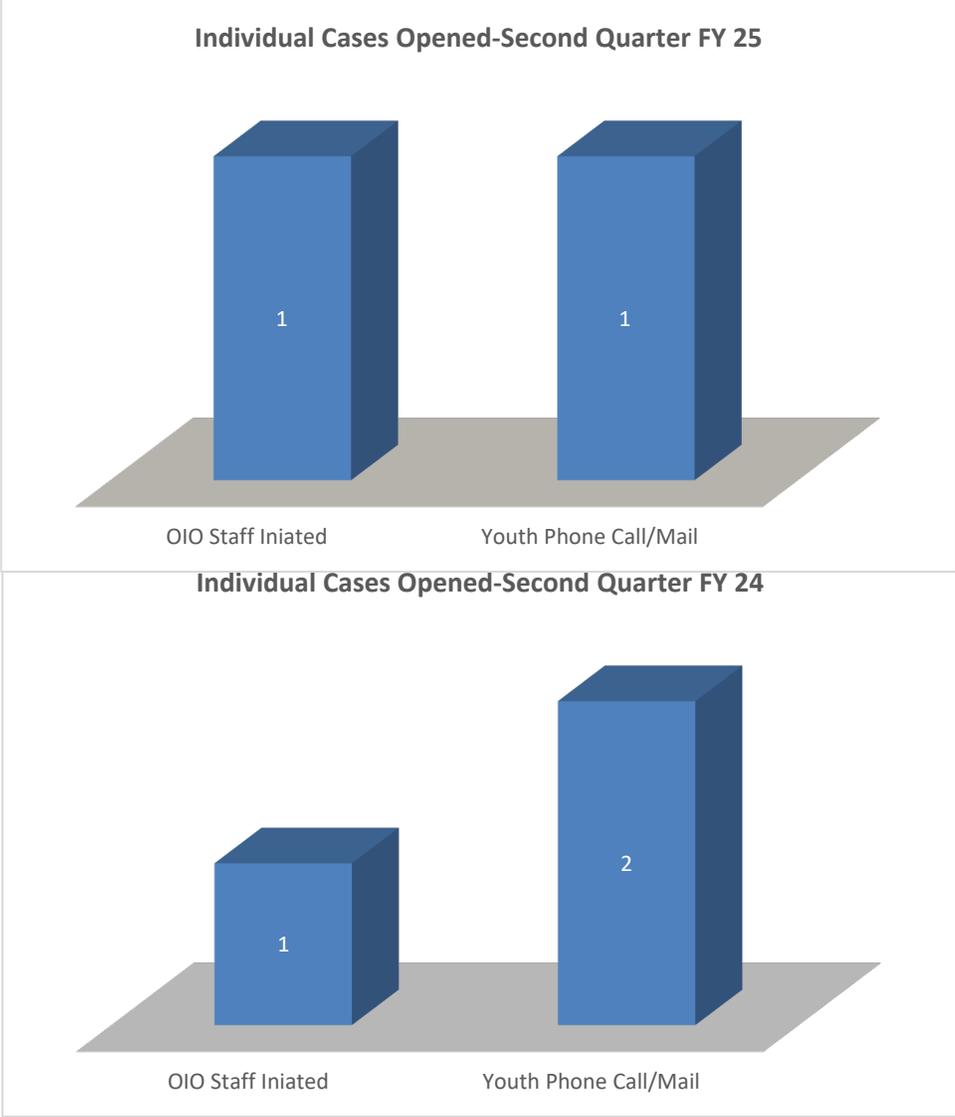


Of the 229 complaints received during the Second quarter of FY 25, one was an Inquiry related to County post-adjudicated youth



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 second quarter of FY 25, the OIO opened two complaints as individual cases, both involving TJJD youth.



Individual Cases by Facility-Second Quarter FY 25

	Total for Facility	Safety Concern	Unresolved Grievance
TJJD/Contract Facilities			
Evins SJCF	1	1	0
Giddings SJCF	1	0	1

Individual Cases by Facility-Second Quarter FY 24

	Total for Facility	Due Process	MLOS/Release Date	Unresolved Grievance
TJJD/Contract Facilities				
Giddings SJCF	2	1	1	0
Ron Jackson SJCF	1	0	0	1

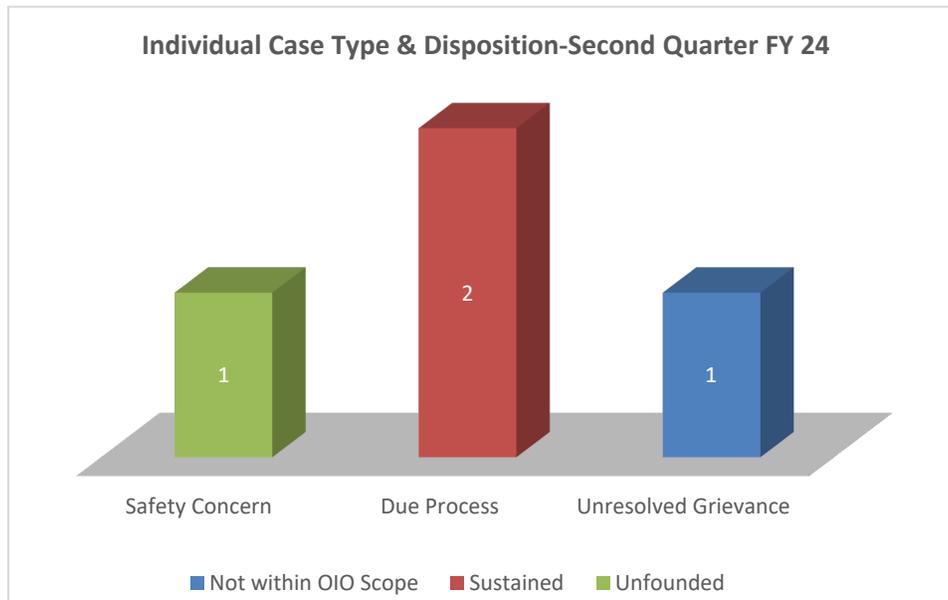
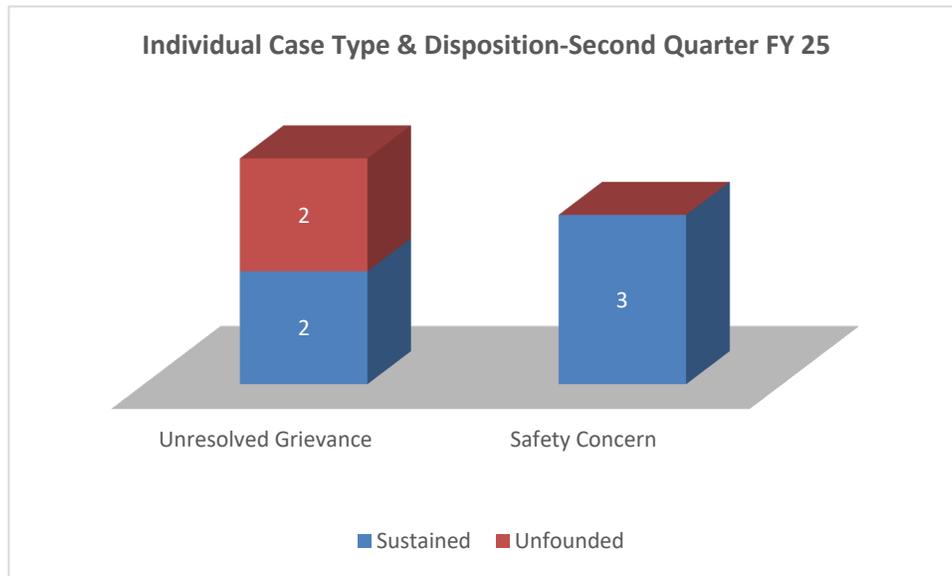
Closed Individual Cases

The OIO closed seven individual cases during the Second quarter of FY 25, all involving TJJD youth.

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

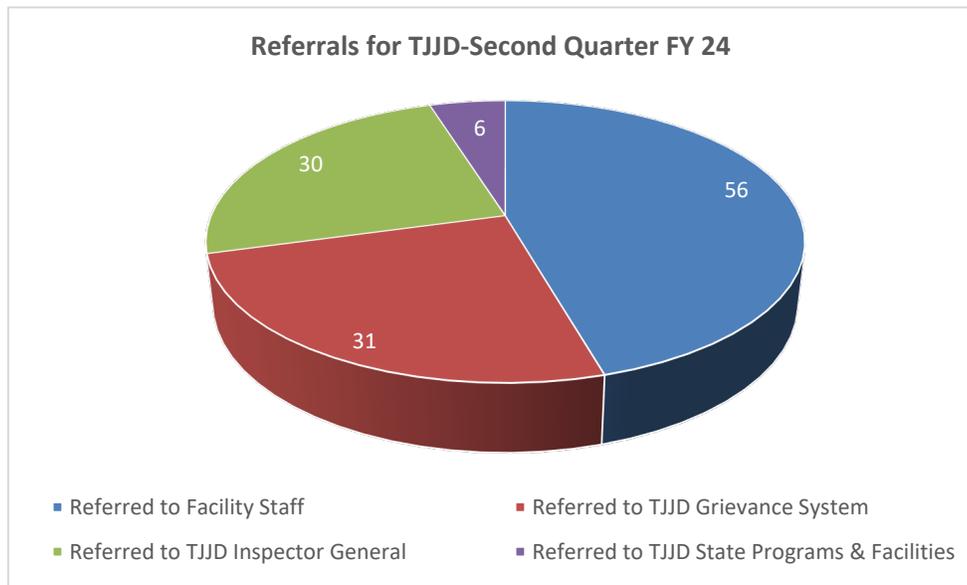
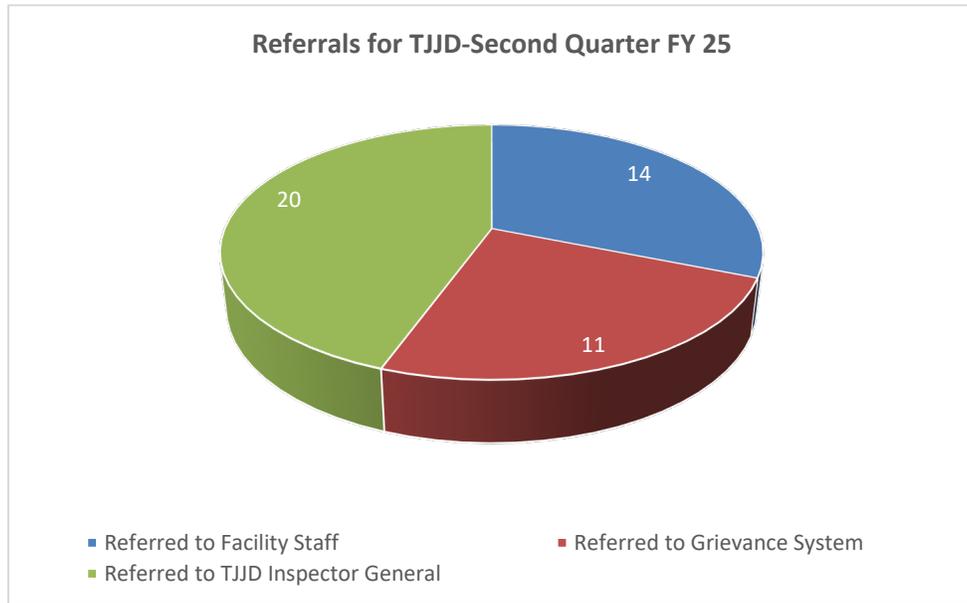
Not Sustained-There is insufficient information or evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.

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

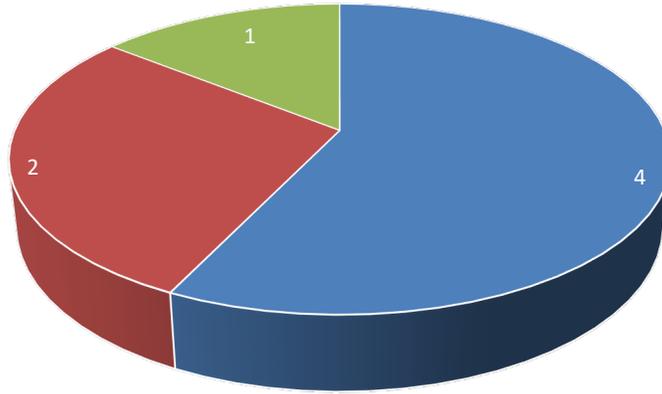


Referrals

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 second quarter of FY 25, the OIO received 52 referrals, 45 related to TJJD youth and seven related to county post adjudicated youth. This is a decrease of 60% from the second quarter of FY 24.

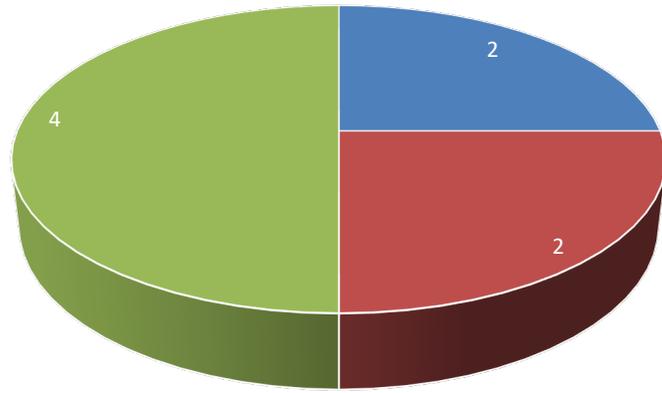


**Referrals for County Post-Adjudicated Facilities
Second Quarter FY 25**



■ Referred to Facility Staff ■ Referred to Grievance System ■ Referred to TJJJ Inspector General

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



■ Referred to Facility Staff ■ Referred to Facility Grievance System ■ Referred to TJJJ Inspector General

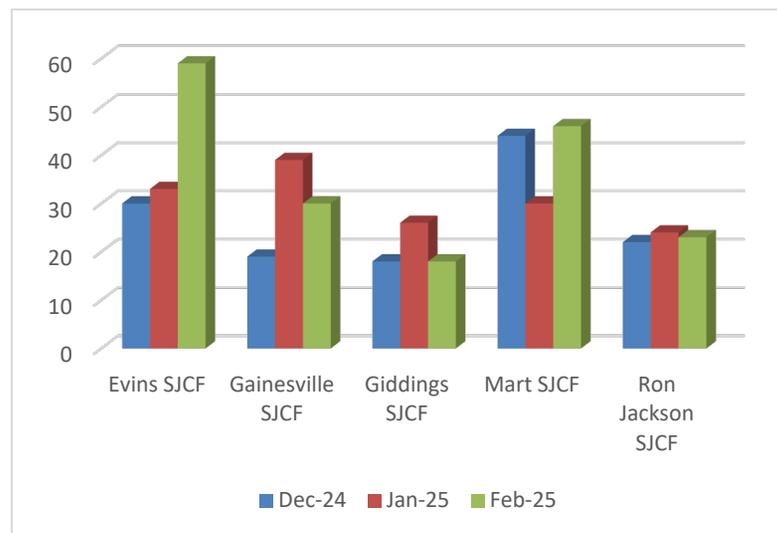
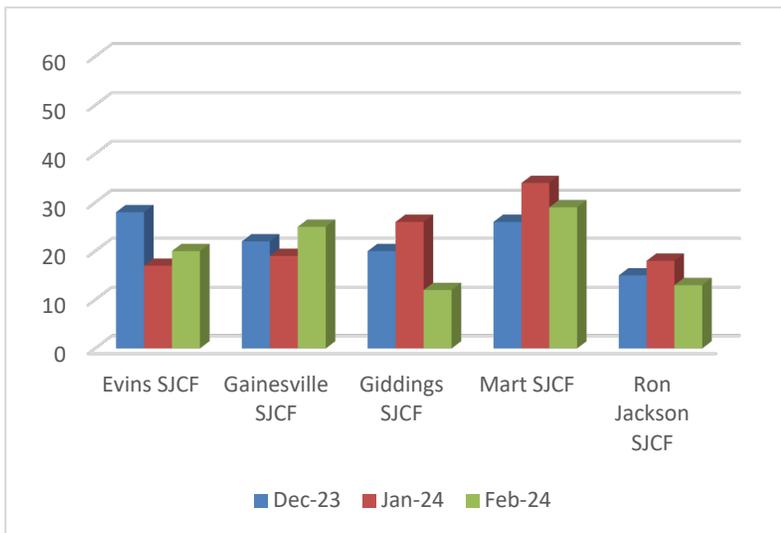
INCIDENT TRENDS FOR TJJD SECURE FACILITIES

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.

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
Evins SJCF	28	17	20
Gainesville SJCF	22	19	25
Giddings SJCF	20	26	12
Mart SJCF	26	34	29
Ron Jackson SJCF	15	18	13

	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
Evins SJCF	30	33	59
Gainesville SJCF	19	39	30
Giddings SJCF	18	26	18
Mart SJCF	44	30	46
Ron Jackson SJCF	22	24	23

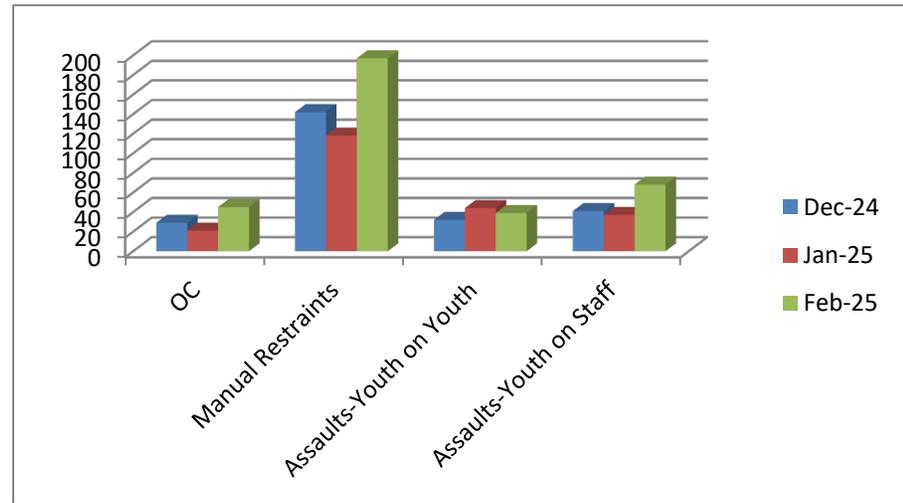
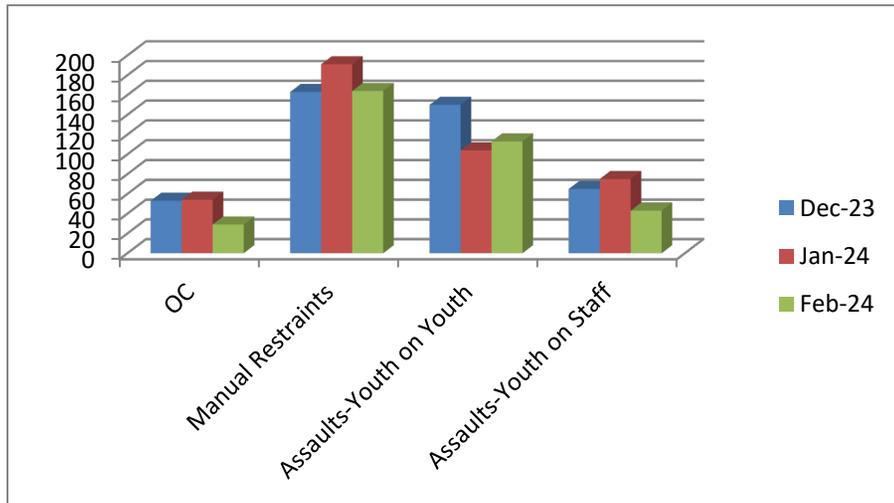


The OIO reviews on a monthly basis at the secure correctional facilities the number of incidents involving the use of OC pepper spray, the number of youth restrained, and assaults involving youth on youth and youth on staff. These metrics give the OIO some indication of the environment related to the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

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
OC Spray	53	54	29
Manual Restraints	163	191	164
Assaults-Youth on Youth	150	104	113
Assaults-Youth on Staff	65	75	43

Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
29	21	45
142	118	197
32	44	39
41	37	68

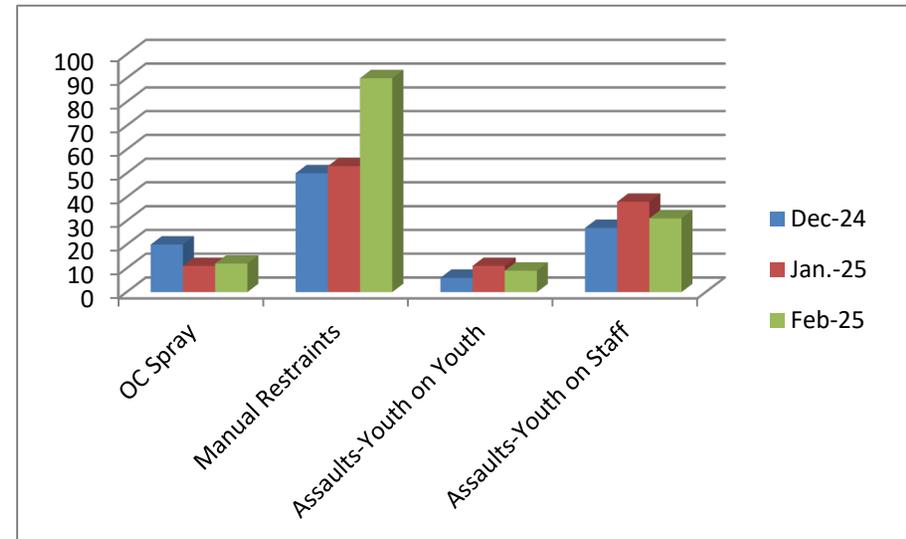
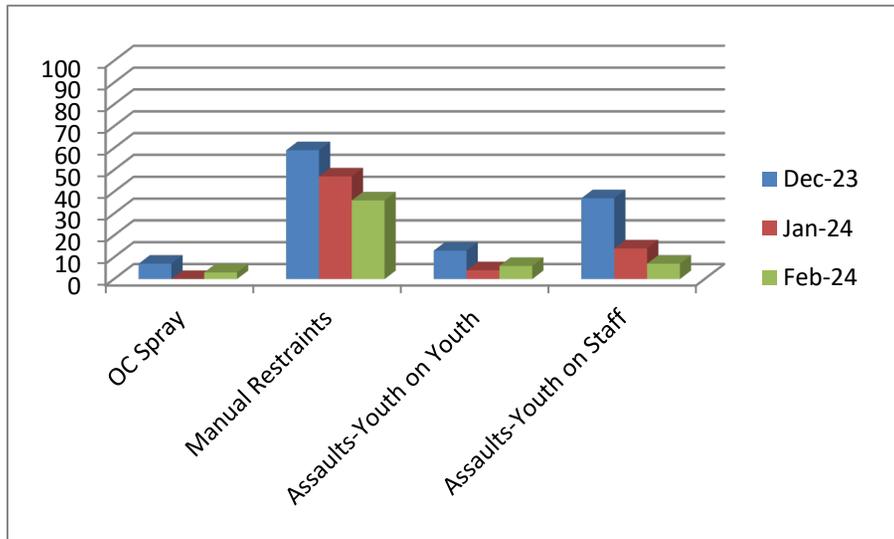


Evins Phoenix Program

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.

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
OC Spray	7	0	3
Manual Restraints	59	47	36
Assaults-Youth on Youth	13	4	6
Assaults-Youth on Staff	37	14	7

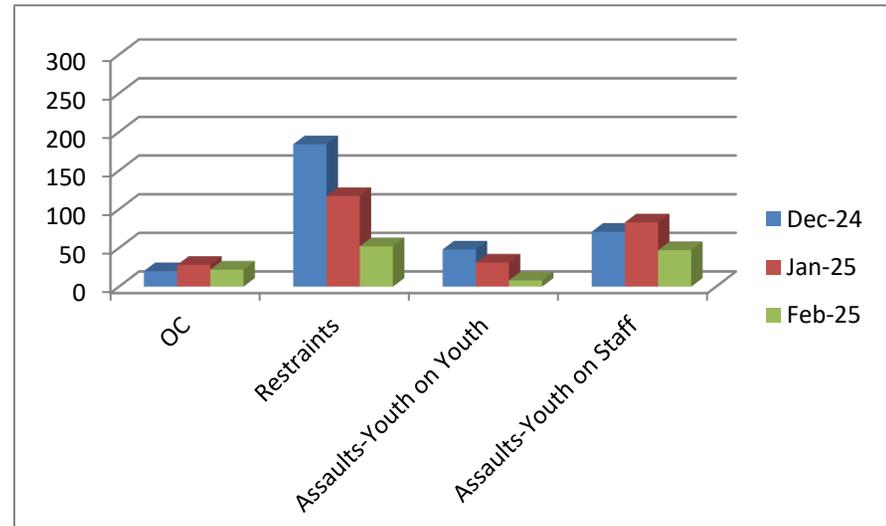
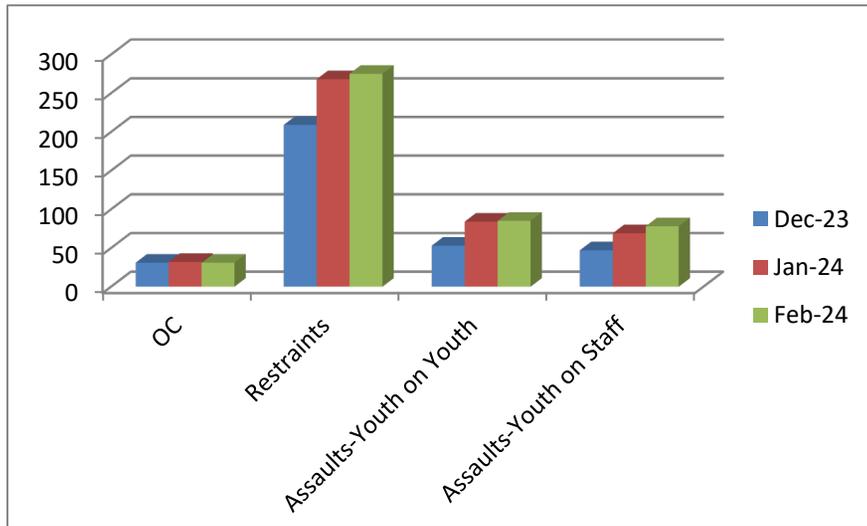
	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
OC Spray	20	11	12
Manual Restraints	50	53	90
Assaults-Youth on Youth	6	11	9
Assaults-Youth on Staff	27	38	31



Gainesville SJCF

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
OC Spray	31	32	31
Manual Restraints	209	268	275
Assaults-Youth on Youth	53	84	85
Assaults-Youth on Staff	47	69	78

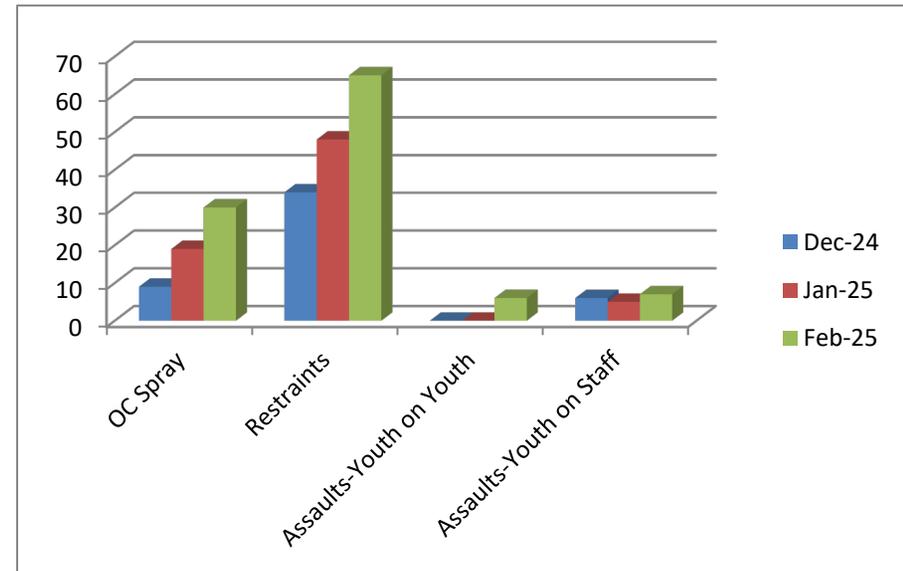
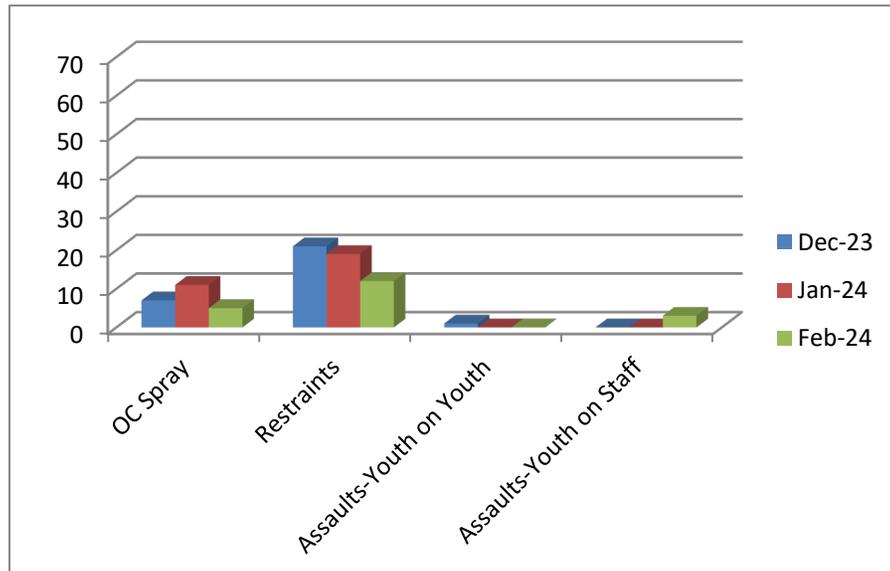
	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
OC Spray	20	28	22
Manual Restraints	184	117	52
Assaults-Youth on Youth	48	31	8
Assaults-Youth on Staff	71	83	47



Giddings SJCF

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
OC Spray	7	11	5
Manual Restraints	21	19	12
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	0	0
Assaults-Youth on Staff	0	0	3

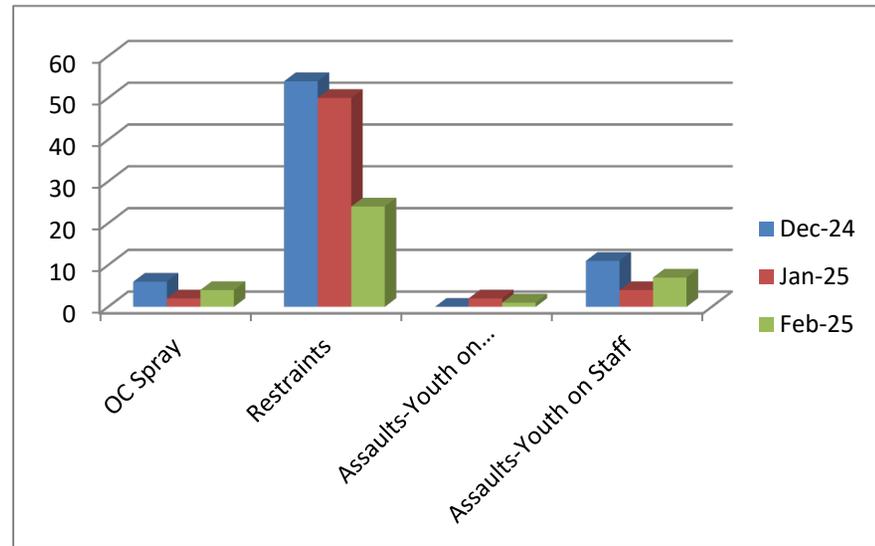
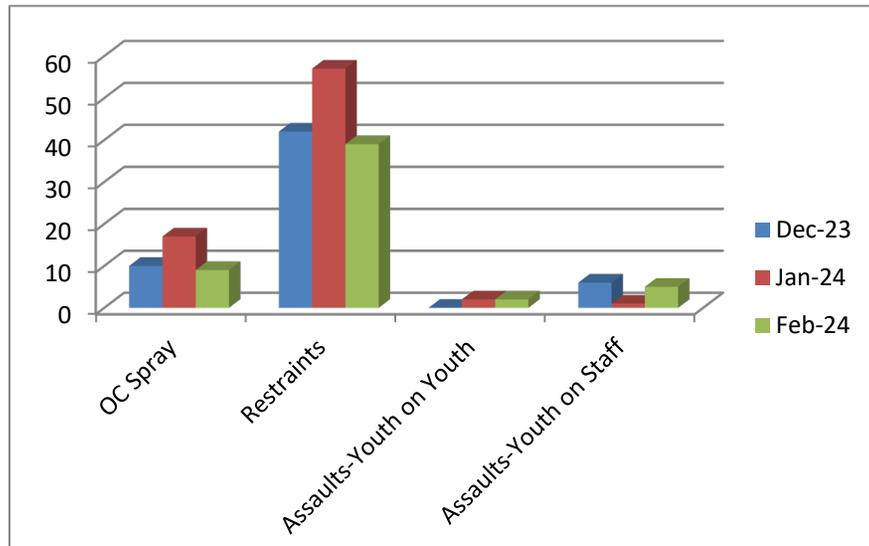
	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
OC Spray	9	19	30
Manual Restraints	34	48	65
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	0	6
Assaults-Youth on Staff	6	5	7



Giddings Mental Health Program

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
OC Spray	10	17	9
Manual Restraints	42	57	39
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	2	2
Assaults-Youth on Staff	6	1	5

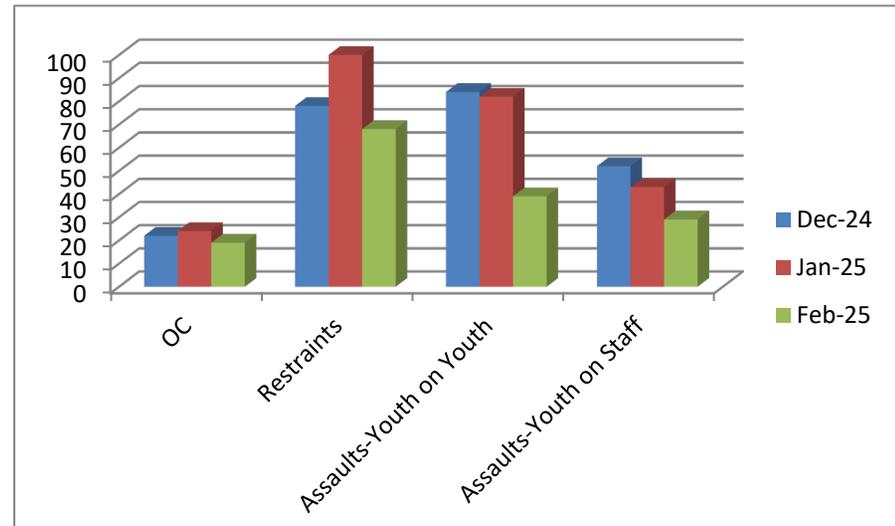
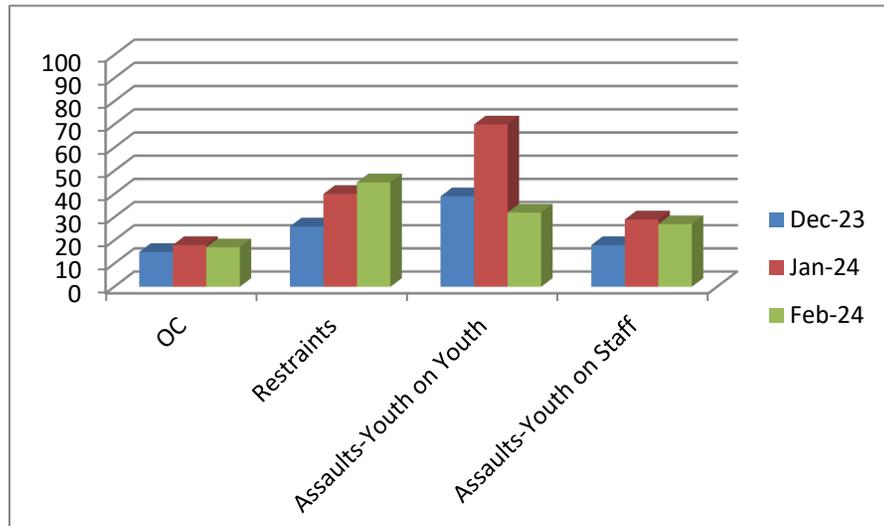
	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
OC Spray	6	2	4
Manual Restraints	54	50	24
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	2	1
Assaults-Youth on Staff	11	4	7



Mart SJCF

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
OC Spray	15	18	17
Manual Restraints	26	40	45
Assaults-Youth on Youth	39	70	32
Assaults-Youth on Staff	18	29	27

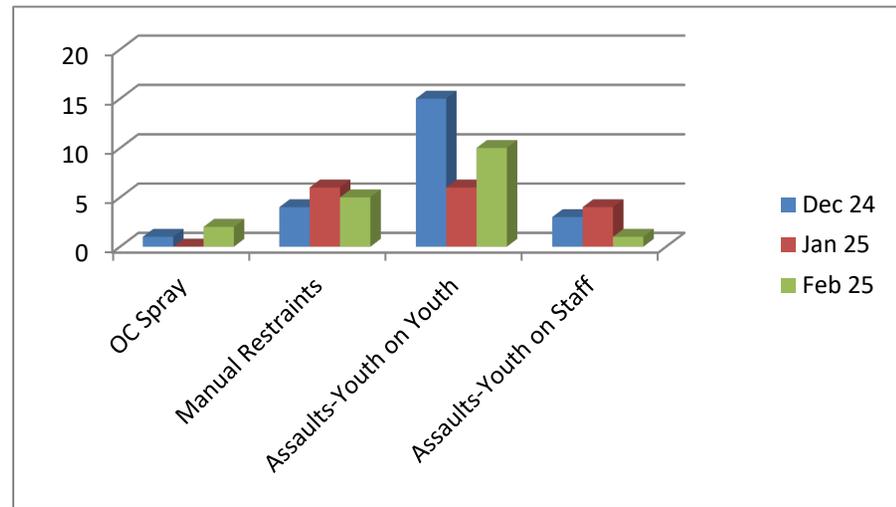
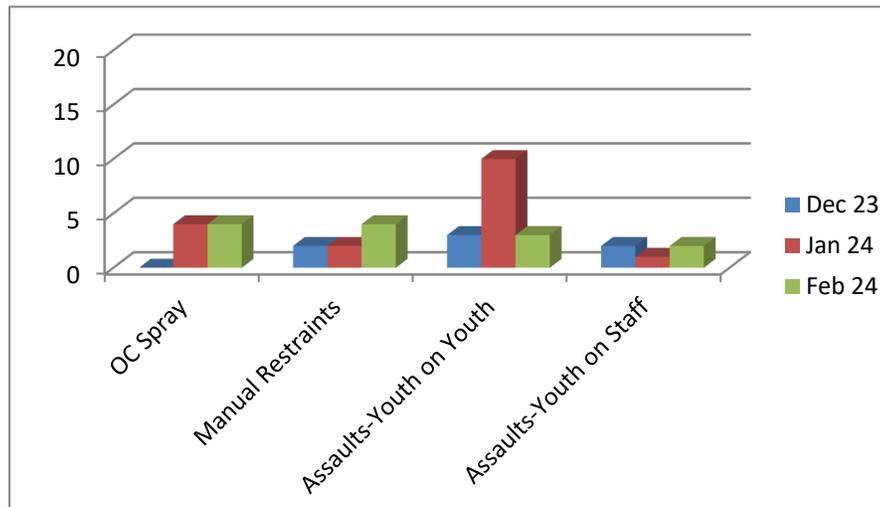
	Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
OC Spray	22	24	19
Manual Restraints	78	100	68
Assaults-Youth on Youth	84	82	39
Assaults-Youth on Staff	52	43	29



Mart-Young Male Program

	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24
OC Spray	0	4	4
Manual Restraints	2	2	4
Assaults-Youth on Youth	3	10	3
Assaults-Youth on Staff	2	1	2

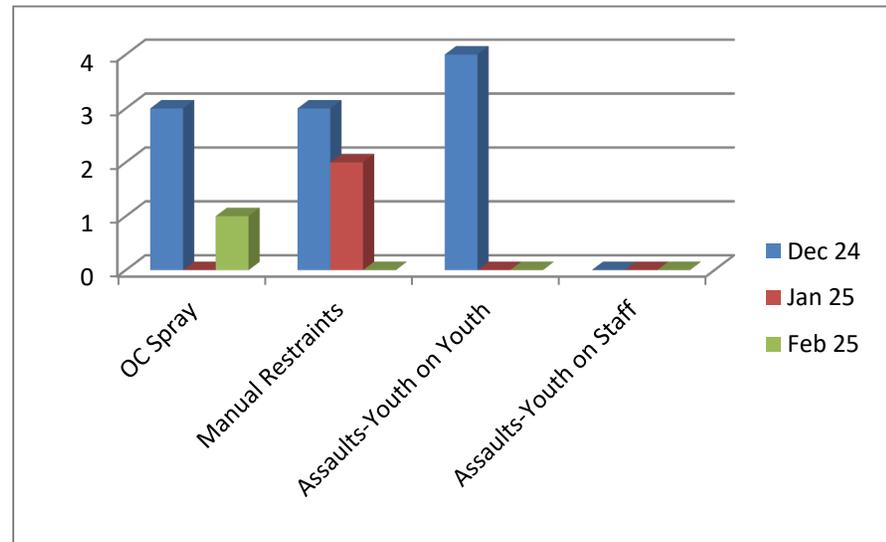
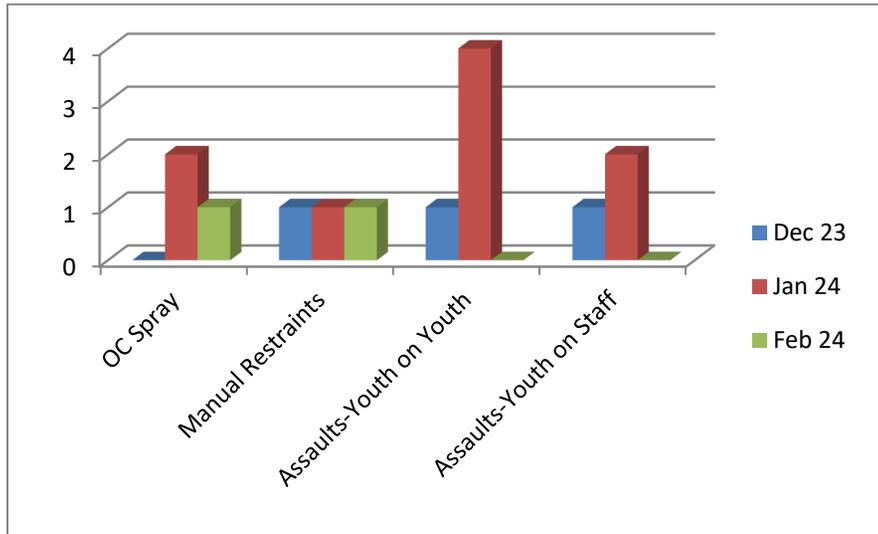
Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25
1	0	2
4	6	5
15	6	10
3	4	1



McLennan County SJCF-Orientation and Assessment (Females Only)

	Dec 23	Jan 24	Feb 24
OC Spray	0	2	1
Manual Restraints	1	1	1
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	4	0
Assaults-Youth on Staff	1	2	0

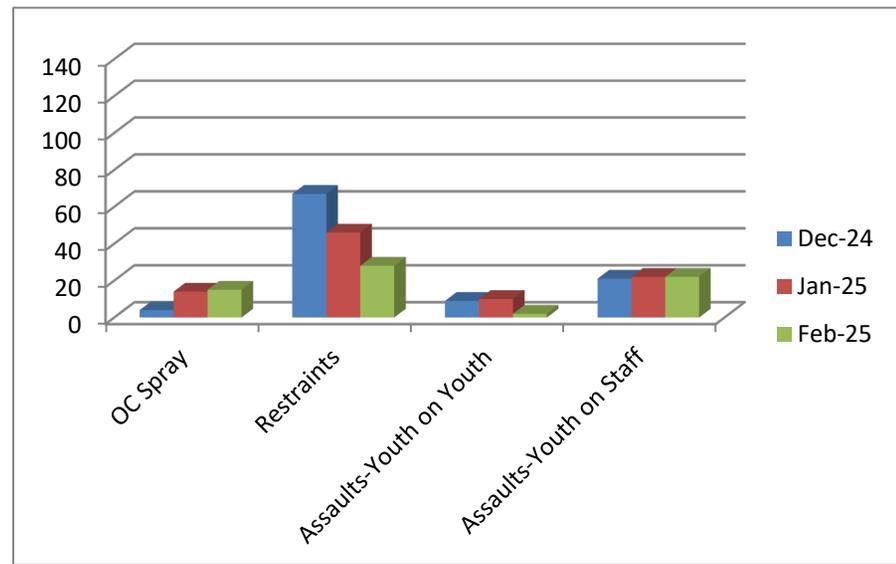
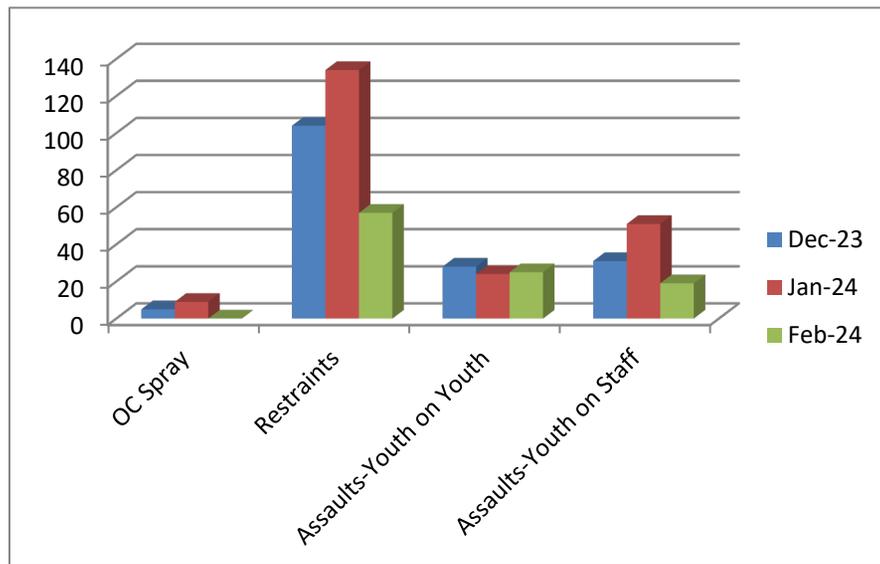
	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25
OC Spray	3	0	1
Manual Restraints	3	2	0
Assaults-Youth on Youth	4	0	0
Assaults-Youth on Staff	0	0	0



Ron Jackson SJCC

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
OC Spray	5	9	0
Manual Restraints	104	134	57
Assaults-Youth on Youth	28	24	25
Assaults-Youth on Staff	31	51	19

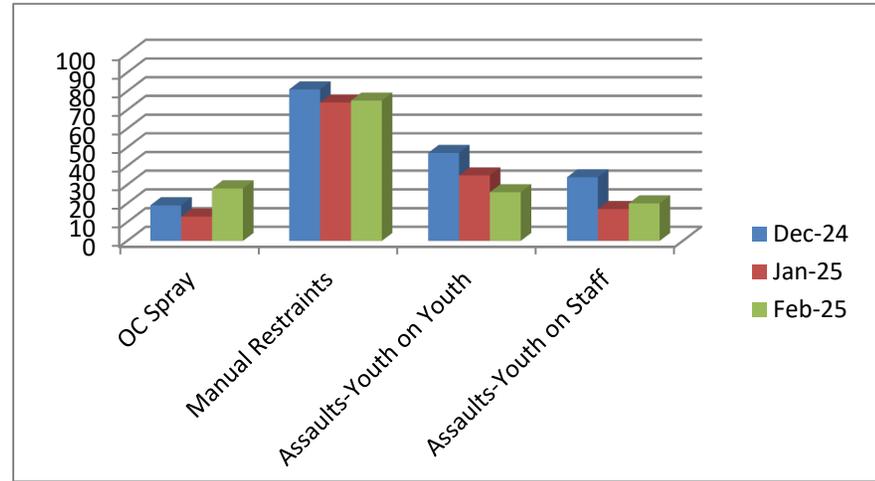
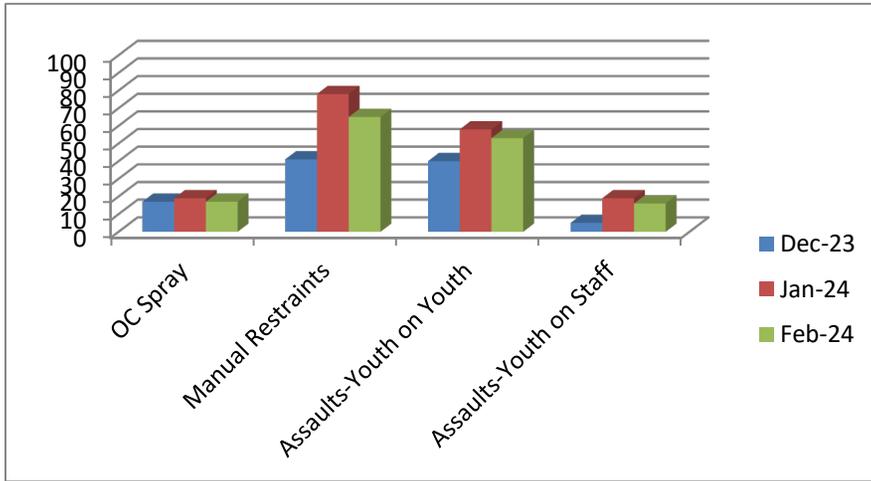
Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
4	14	15
67	46	28
9	10	2
21	22	22



Ron Jackson SJCC-Orientation and Assessment (Males Only)

	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24
OC Spray	17	19	17
Manual Restraints	41	78	65
Assaults-Youth on Youth	40	58	53
Assaults-Youth on Staff	5	19	16

Dec-24	Jan-25	Feb-25
19	13	28
81	74	75
47	35	26
34	17	20



The OIO is uniquely positioned to observe trends and patterns objectively within the secure facilities during site visits, records review, staff and youth interviews, and complaints and grievances reviews. The OIO remains concerned about high staff turnover rates and staff shortages, which lead to staff fatigue and ultimately decreased supervision of youth offenders within the state's secure facilities. TJJJD has made a significant investment in the attempted hiring of additional staff, particularly in the area of Juvenile Corrections Officers (JCOs), as well as continuing to seek pay raises for this and other critical positions within the department.

During this reporting period, the OIO observed several patterns concerning the safety and security of the state's secured facilities. First, the volume and the acuity level of assaults by youth offenders on the staff, particularly the Juvenile Corrections Officers (JCO), were concerning. The assaultive conduct by the youth offenders generally appeared to be unprovoked by the staff, and it often led to an injury or the potential for serious injury being incurred by the JCOs, staff, and other youth as well. The OIO is concerned that this level of violence will increase the difficulty of TJJJD in delivering programming to the youth committed to the department.

Secondly, the OIO reviewed several serious incidents that indicated that the current training curriculum or the delivery of the curriculum to the JCOs needed review. The OIO observed issues with youth engagement, responsiveness from JCOs to serious incidents, and a lack of situational awareness during stressful events such as restraints. Based on those concerns, I directed that OIO resources be utilized to create a new section in our Crimes Database titled "Case Study". The case study will be a review by an ombudsman addressing specific topics that did not necessarily rise to the level of a direct youth rights violation. Instead, the case study would utilize the OIO's statutory authority to review "systemic issues" or "recommend changes in any procedures" related to the youth committed to TJJJD. The first case study based on the above-stated concerns was assigned to an ombudsman during this reporting period, and the results will be reported upon the completion of the study.

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 second quarter

Secure Facilities

Evins SJCF-*Edinburg TX*

Gainesville SJCF-*Gainesville TX*

Giddings SJCF-*Giddings TX*

Mart SJCF-*Mart TX*

Ron Jackson SJCF -*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 North

Region Southeast

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*
Darrell B. Hester Juvenile Detention Center-*San Benito 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 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)
Nueces County Juvenile Detention Center-*Corpus Christi TX*
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*
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*
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*
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*