

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



Third Quarter Report FY 25

March 1, 2025 to May 31, 2025

INTRODUCTION

This is the third 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 March 2025 through May 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 892 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 one as sustained.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Systemic Issues are recurring findings within a single facility or across multiple facilities occurring over a period of time that 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

	3rd Quarter FY24	2nd Quarter FY25	3rd Quarter FY25	FY25 Total
TJJD/Contract Site Visits	27	23	23	68
County Post Adjudicated/Contract Facility Site Visits	67	78	75	229
Number of Youth Interviewed	804	846	892	2022
Number of Youth Interviews Conducted	954	988	1058	3088
Closed Individual Cases	5	7	1	10

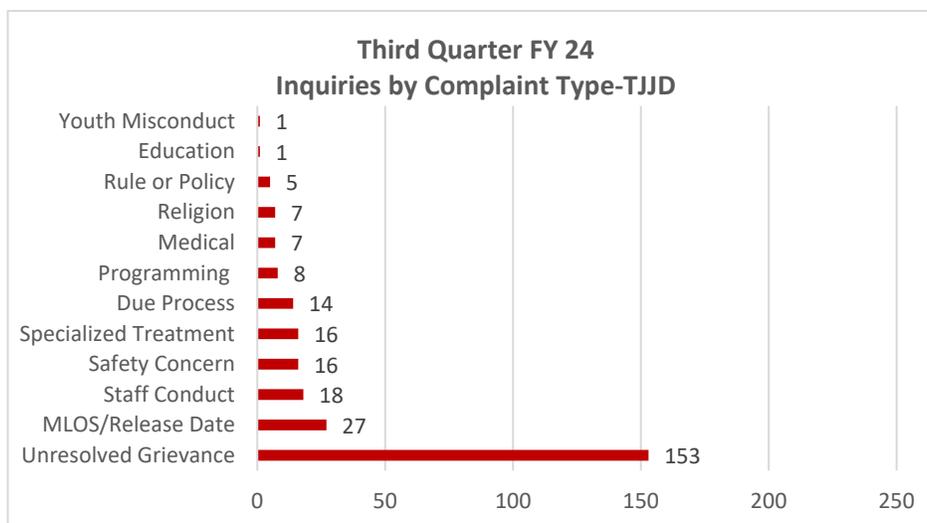
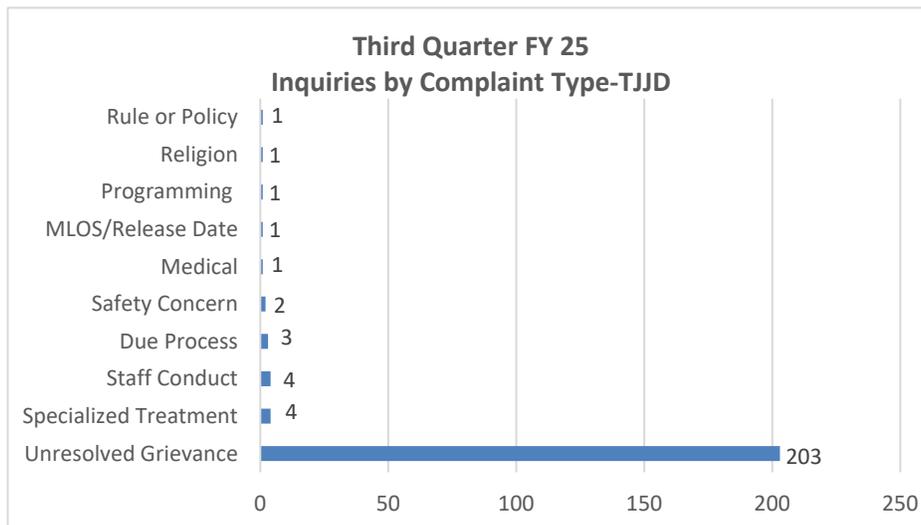
Inquiries

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.

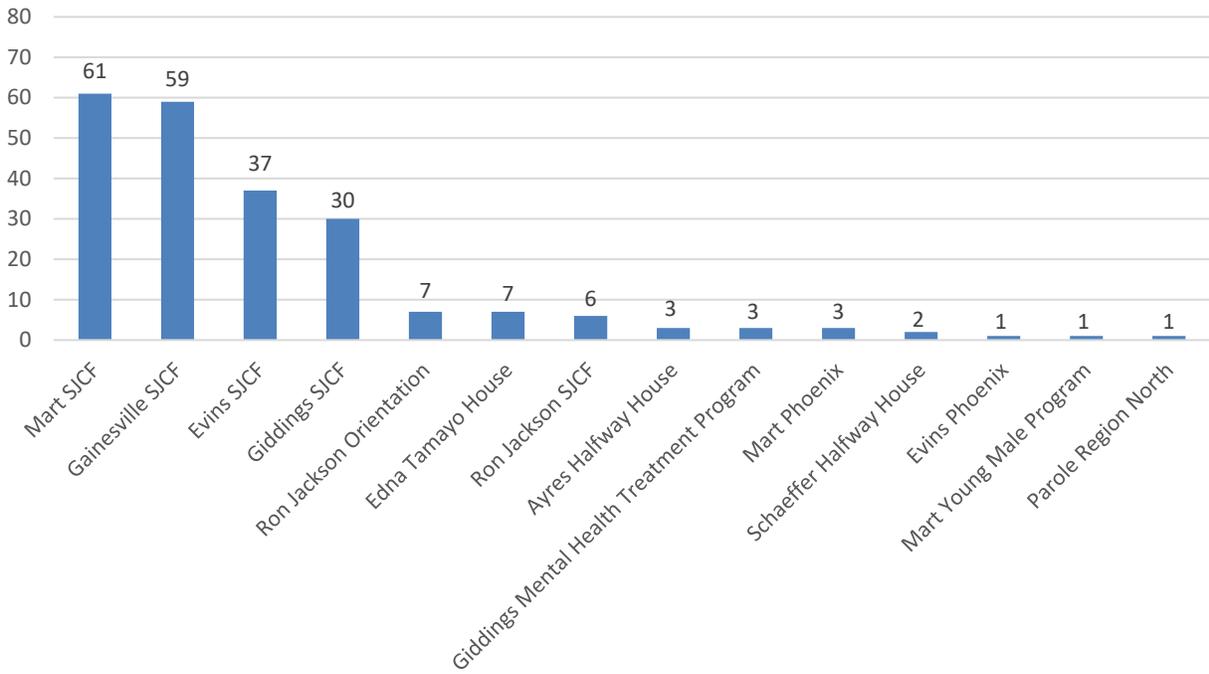
The OIO received 231 complaints during the third quarter of FY 25, 221 related to TJJD and 10 related to county post-adjudicated facilities. This represents a 17% decrease compared to the third quarter of FY 24.

Inquiries TJJD

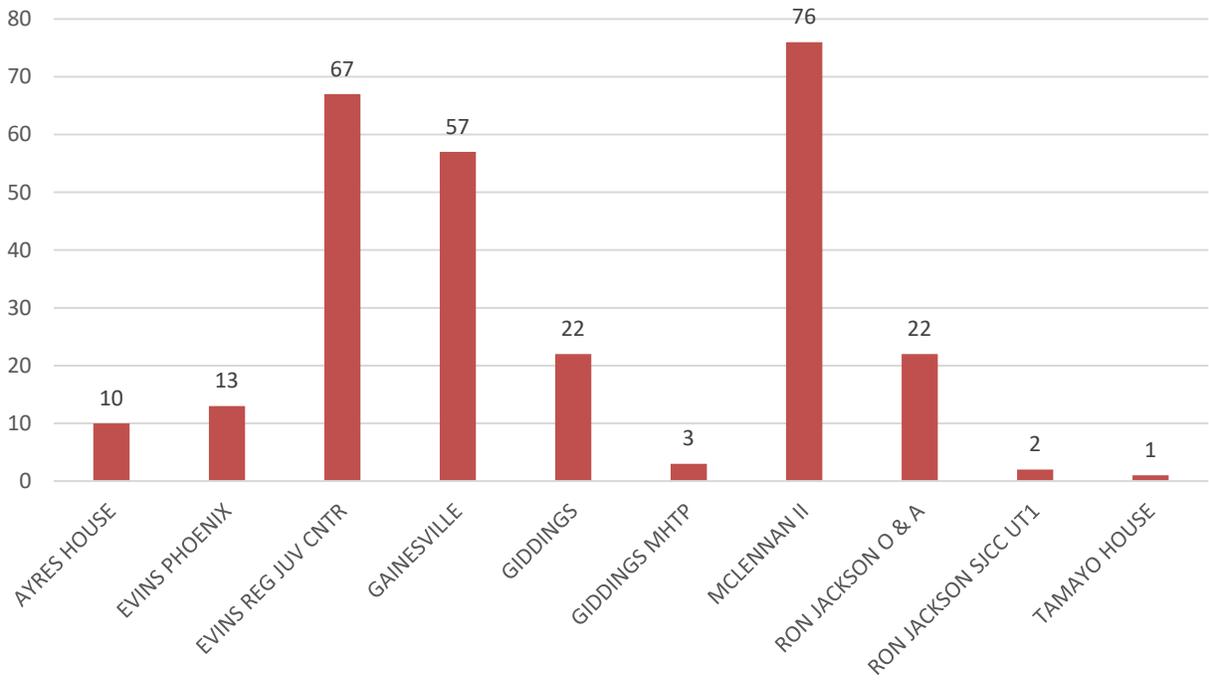
Of the 231 complaints received during the third quarter, 221 were Inquiries related to TJJD youth.



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

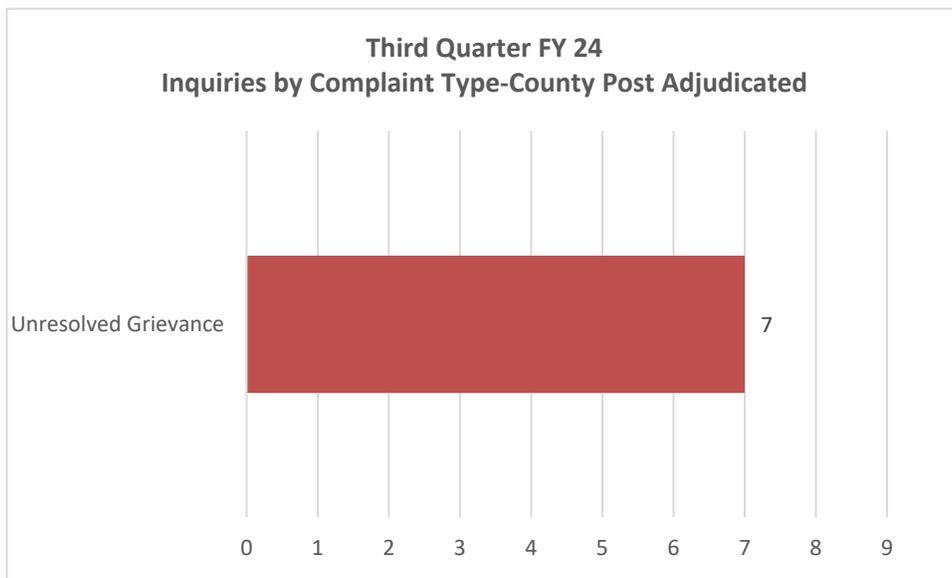
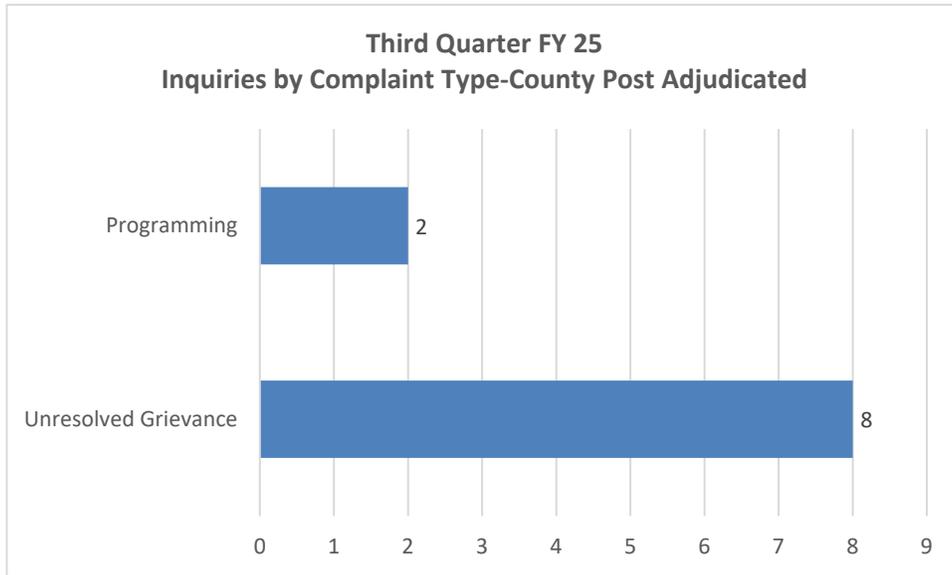


**Third Quarter FY 24
Inquiries by Facility-TJJD**



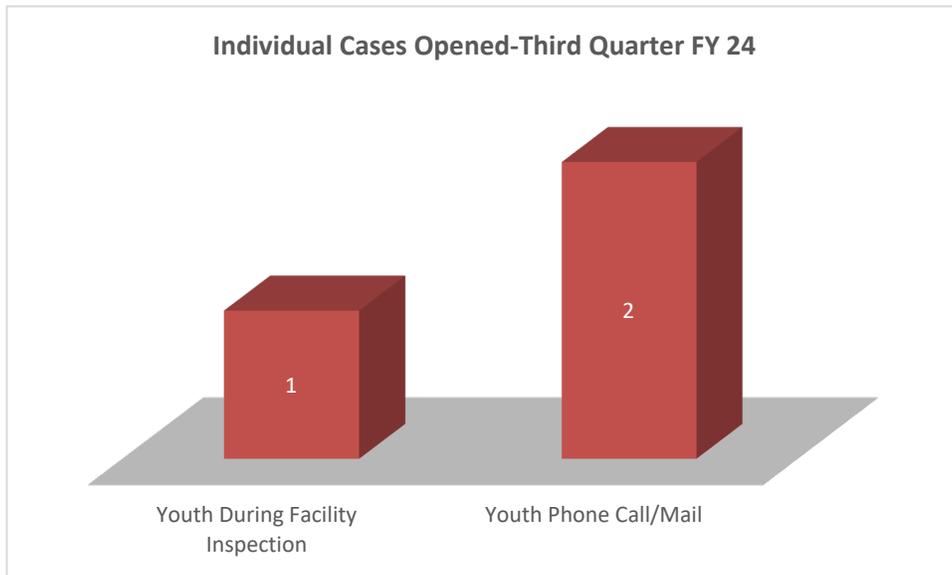
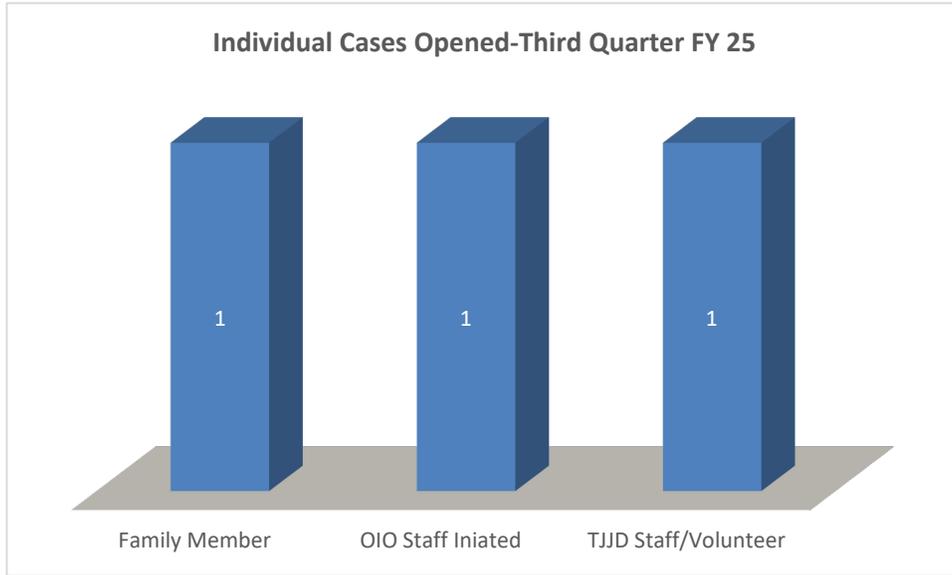
Inquiries-County

Of the 229 complaints received during the third quarter of FY 25, 10 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 25, the OIO opened three complaints as individual cases, all involving TJJD youth.



Individual Cases by Facility-Third Quarter FY 25

	Total for Facility	Safety Concern	Specialized Treatment
TJJD/Contract Facilities			
Evins SJCF	1	1	0
Mart SJCF	2	1	1

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

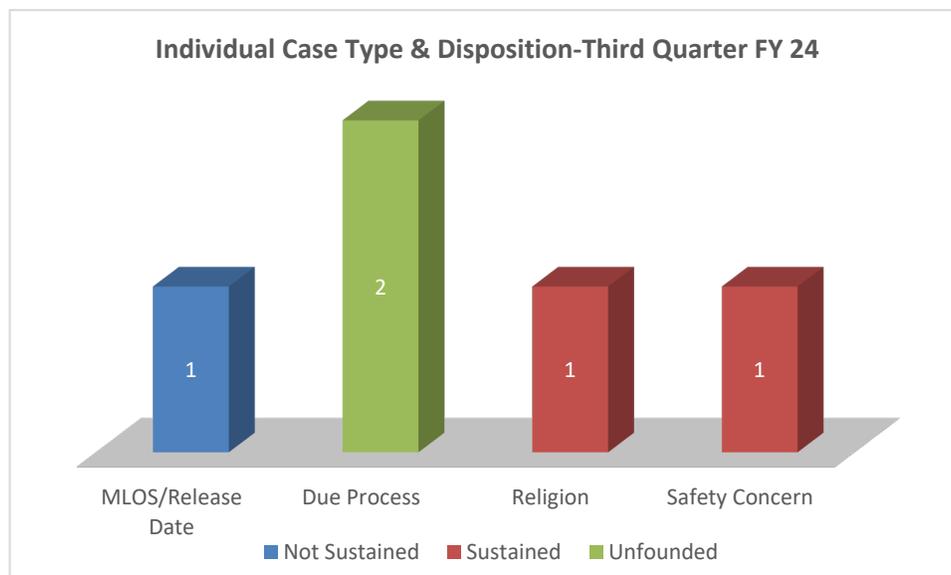
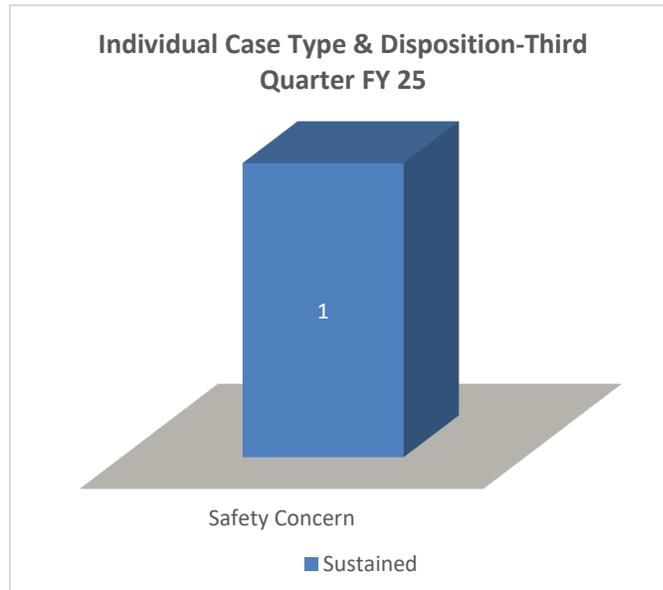
Closed Individual Cases

The OIO closed one individual case involving a TJJD youth during the third quarter of FY 25.

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

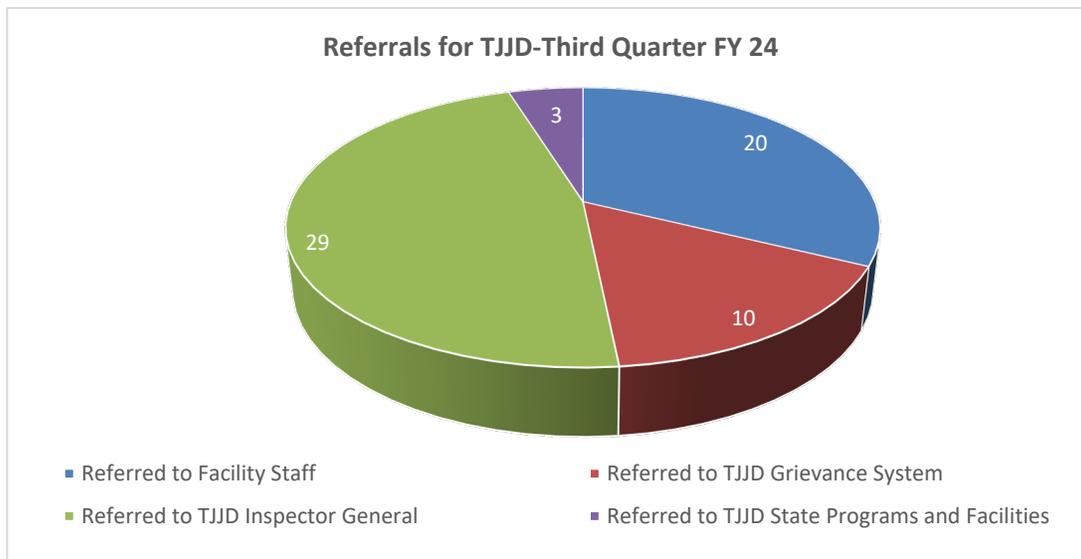
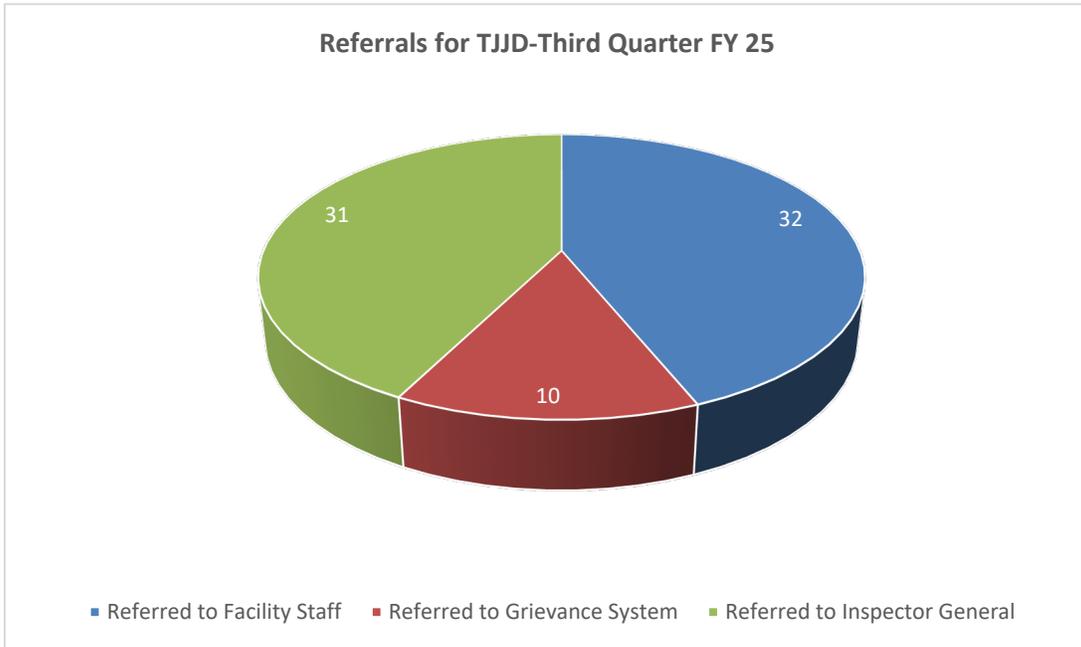
Not Sustained-There is insufficient information or evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.

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

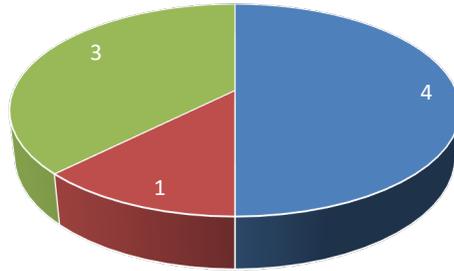


Referrals

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 third quarter of FY 25, the OIO received 81 referrals, 73 related to TJJJ youth and eight related to county post adjudicated youth. This is an increase of 21% from the third quarter of FY 24.

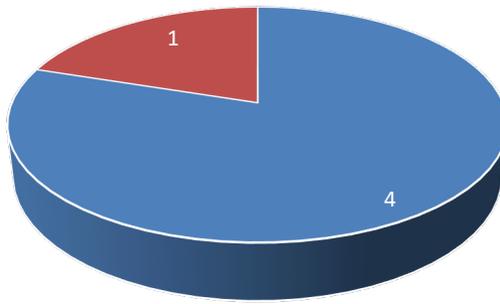


**Referrals for County Post-Adjudicated Facilities
Third Quarter FY 25**



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

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



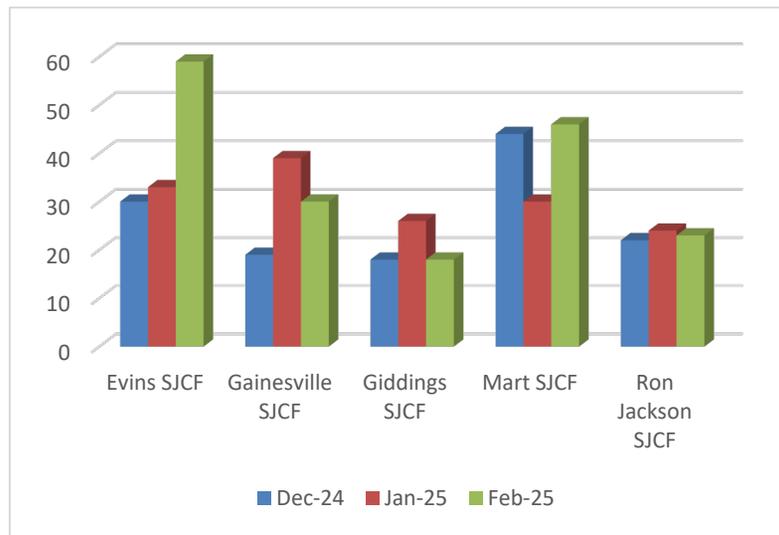
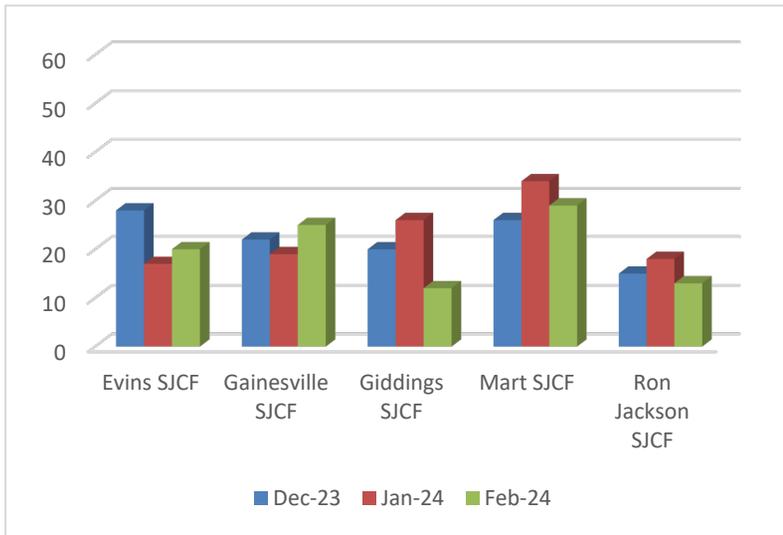
- Referred to Facility Staff
- Referred to Regulatory/Oversight Entity

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.

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
Evins SJCF	19	34	23	62	30	18
Gainesville SJCF	35	29	33	40	28	51
Giddings SJCF	22	21	17	15	22	21
Mart SJCF	46	52	69	54	53	51
Ron Jackson SJCF	14	26	19	32	30	24

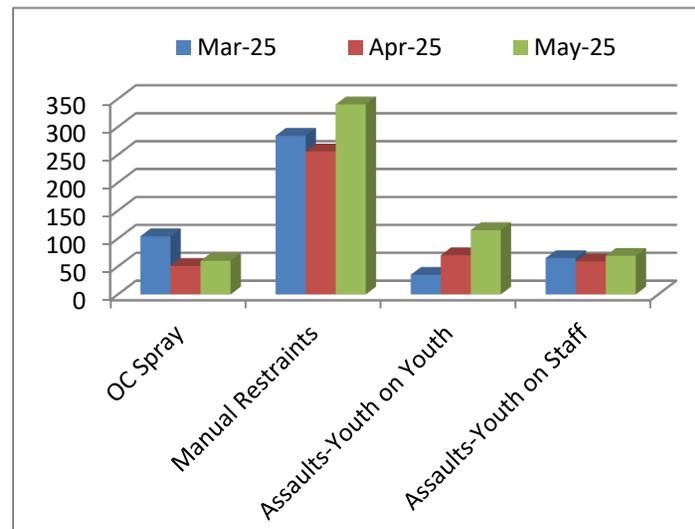
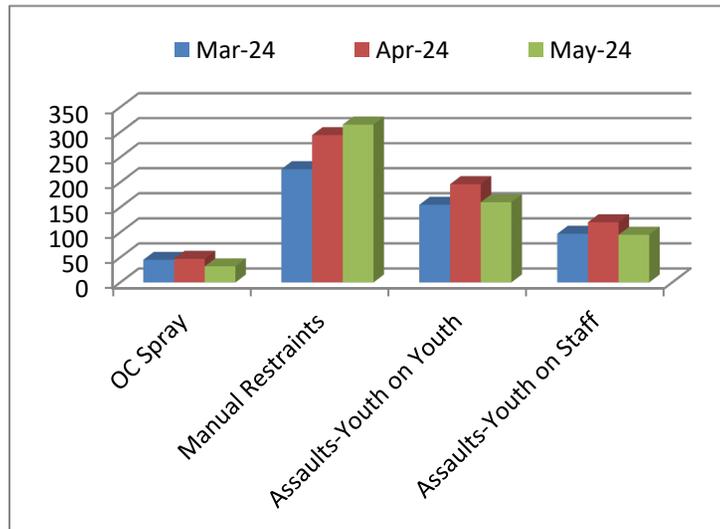


The OIO reviews on a monthly basis at the secure correctional facilities the number of incidents involving the use of OC pepper spray, the number of youth restrained, and assaults involving youth on youth and youth on staff. These metrics give the OIO some indication of the environment related to the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

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	45	47	32
Manual Restraints	226	294	315
Assaults-Youth on Youth	155	196	160
Assaults-Youth on Staff	97	120	95

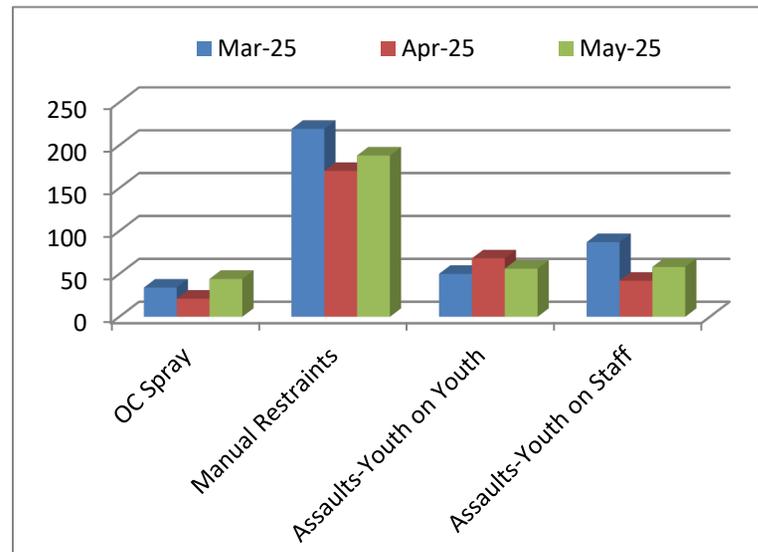
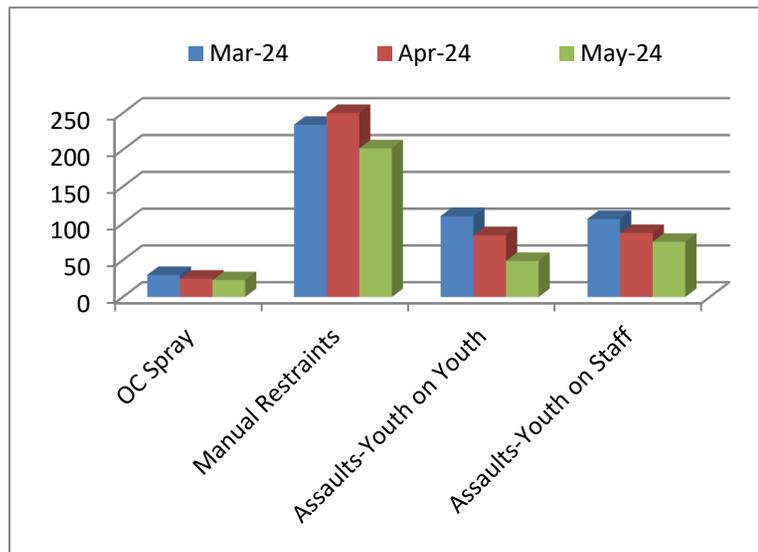
	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
OC Spray	104	51	60
Manual Restraints	284	256	340
Assaults-Youth on Youth	35	70	115
Assaults-Youth on Staff	65	59	69



Gainesville SJCF

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	30	25	23
Manual Restraints	234	250	202
Assaults-Youth on Youth	110	84	49
Assaults-Youth on Staff	106	87	75

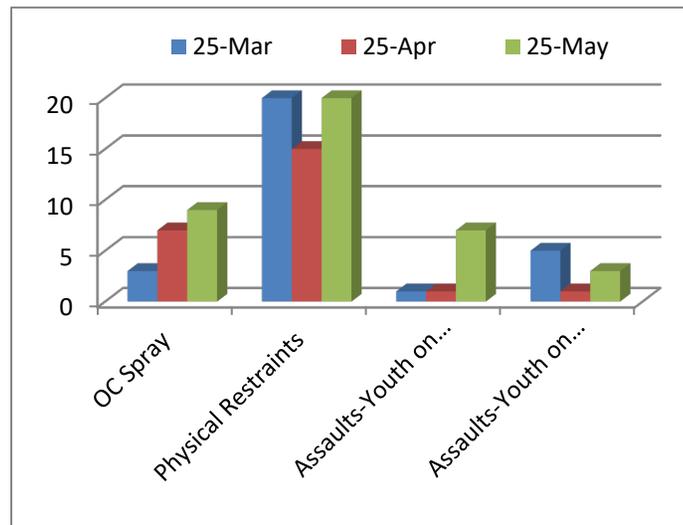
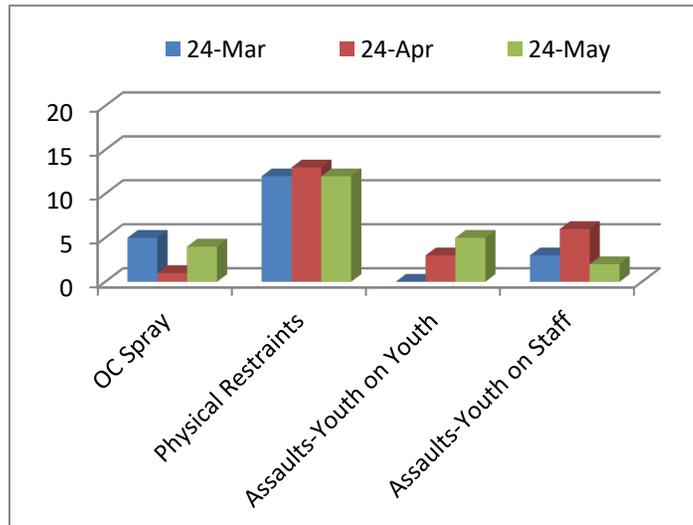
Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
34	21	44
219	170	188
50	68	56
87	42	58



Giddings SJCF

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	5	1	4
Manual Restraints	12	13	12
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	3	5
Assaults-Youth on Staff	3	6	2

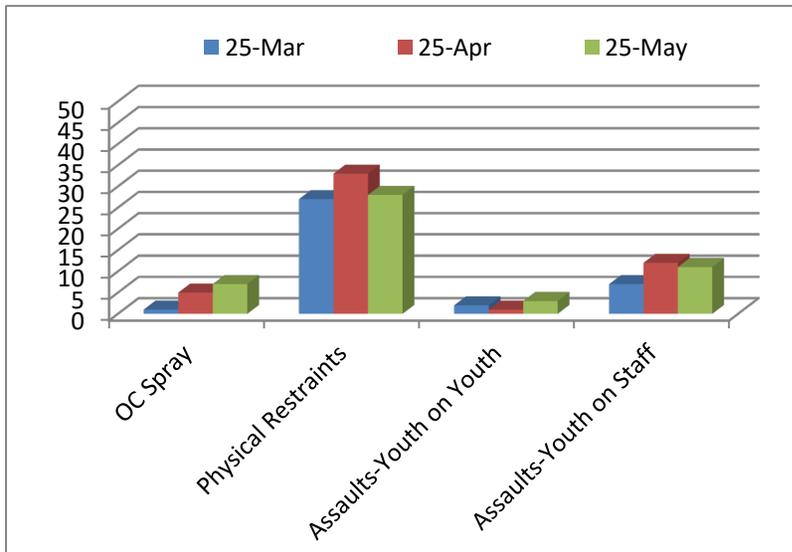
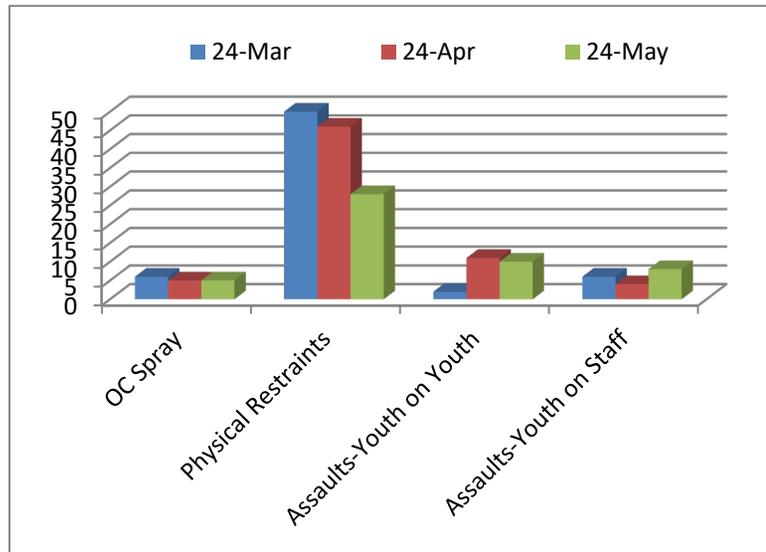
Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
3	7	9
20	15	20
1	1	7
5	1	3



Giddings Mental Health Program

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	6	5	5
Manual Restraints	55	46	28
Assaults-Youth on Youth	2	11	10
Assaults-Youth on Staff	6	4	8

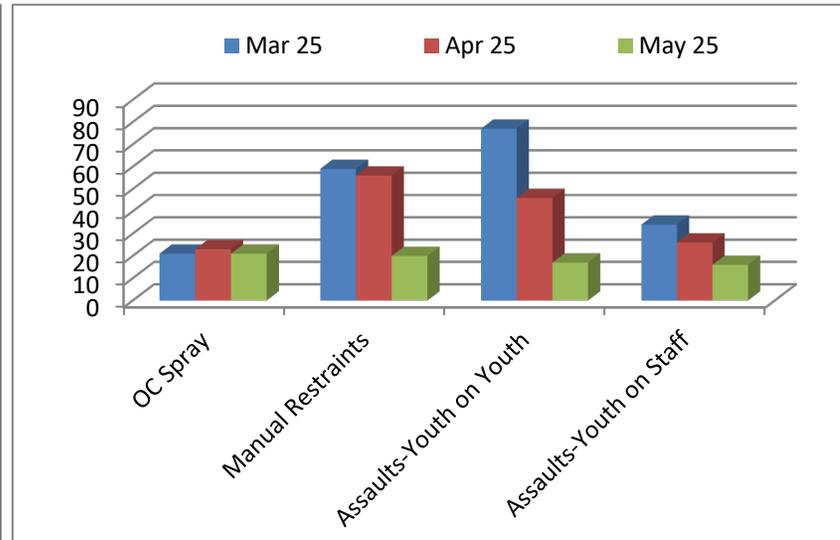
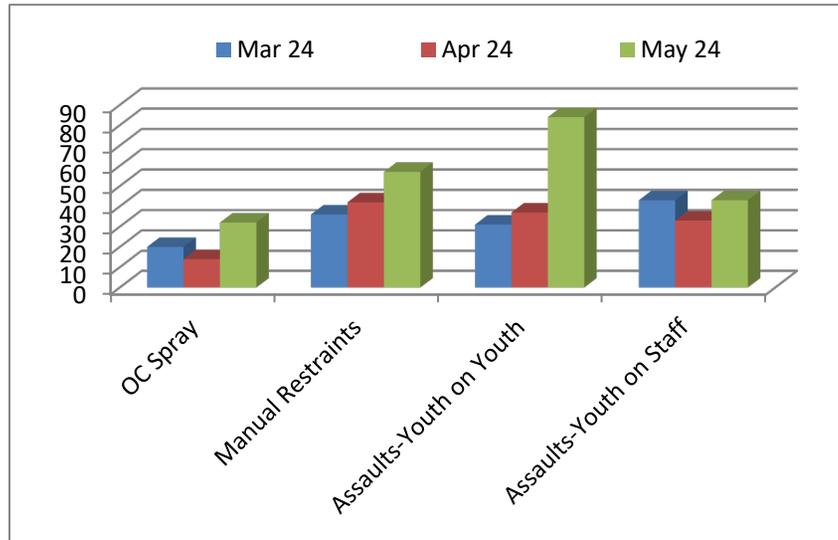
Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
1	5	7
27	33	28
2	1	3
7	12	11



Mart SJCF

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	20	14	32
Manual Restraints	36	42	57
Assaults-Youth on Youth	31	37	84
Assaults-Youth on Staff	43	33	43

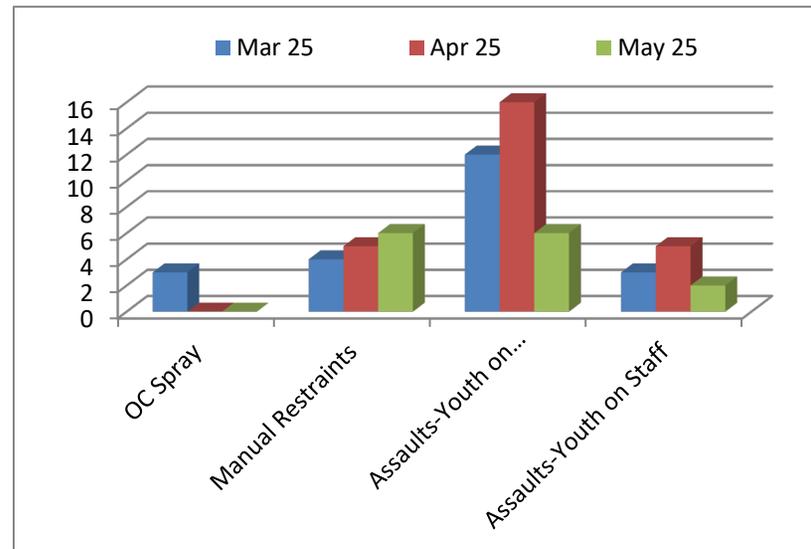
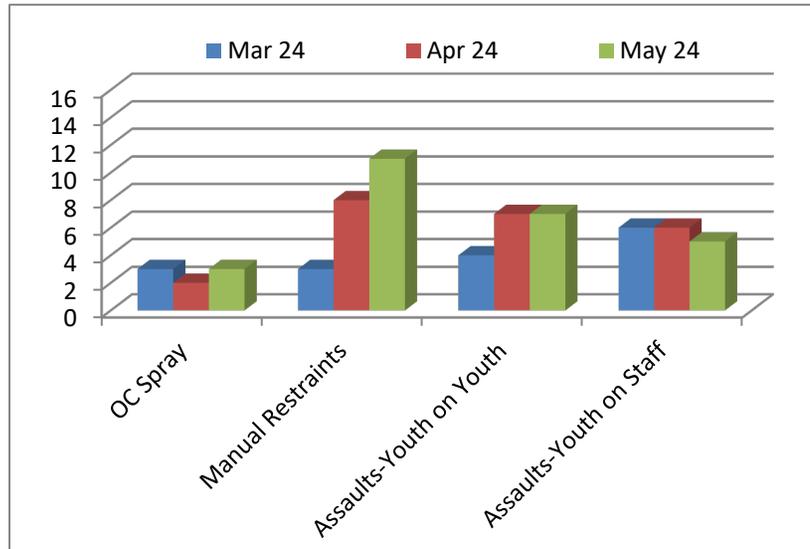
Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
21	23	21
59	56	20
77	46	17
34	26	16



Mart-Young Male Program

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	3	2	3
Manual Restraints	3	8	11
Assaults-Youth on Youth	4	7	7
Assaults-Youth on Staff	6	6	5

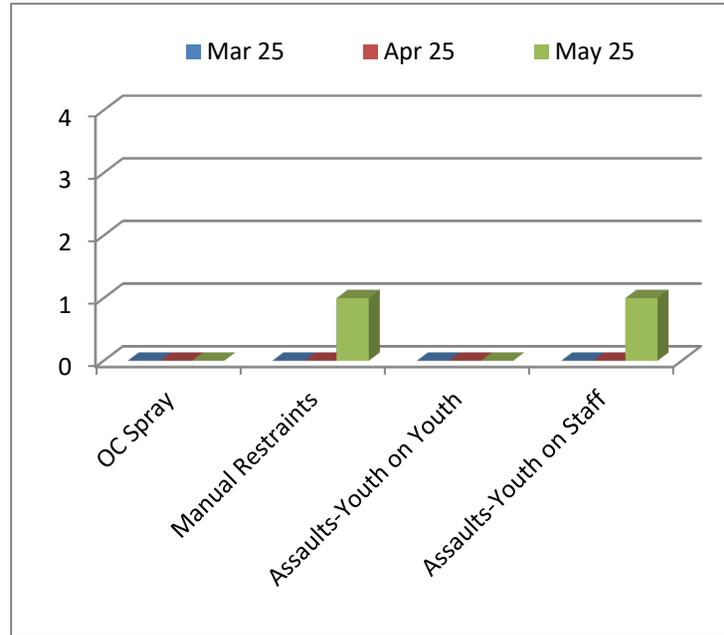
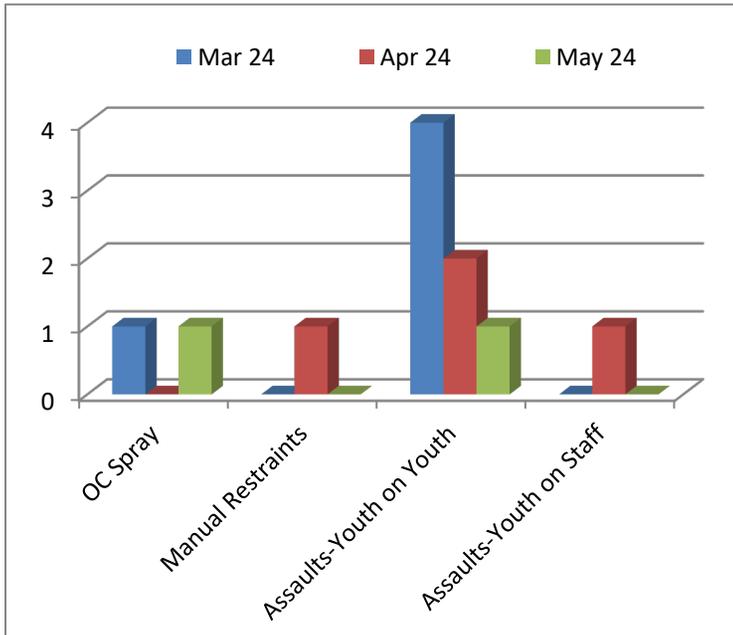
Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
3	0	0
4	5	6
12	16	6
3	5	2



Mart-Orientation and Assessment (Females Only)

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	1	0	1
Manual Restraints	0	1	0
Assaults-Youth on Youth	4	2	1
Assaults-Youth on Staff	0	1	0

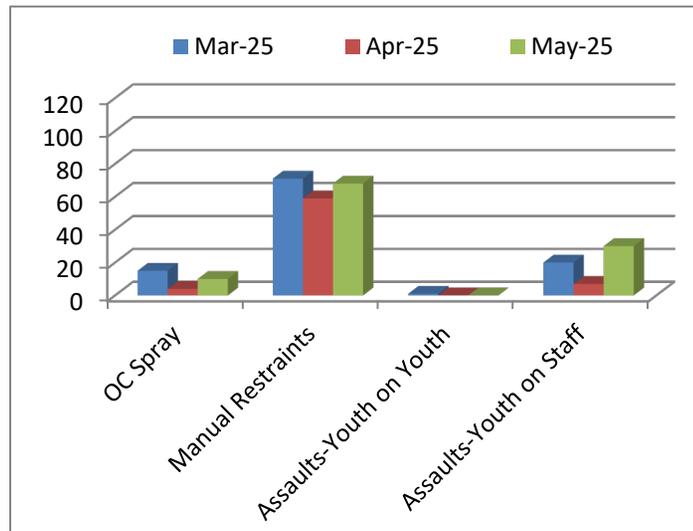
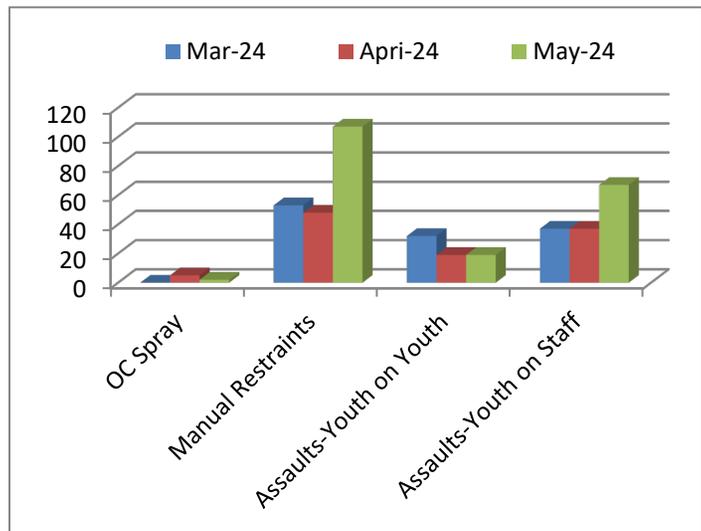
	Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
OC Spray	0	0	0
Manual Restraints	0	0	1
Assaults-Youth on Youth	0	0	0
Assaults-Youth on Staff	0	0	1



Ron Jackson SJCF

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	0	5	2
Manual Restraints	53	48	107
Assaults-Youth on Youth	32	19	19
Assaults-Youth on Staff	37	37	67

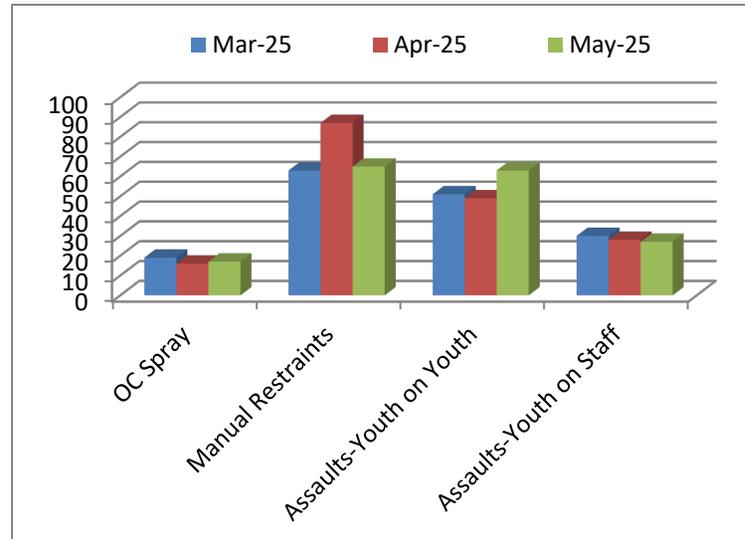
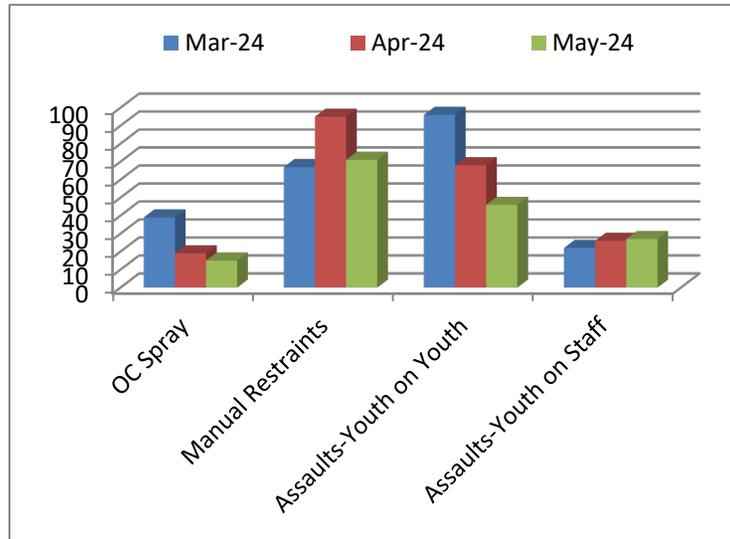
Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
15	4	10
71	59	68
1	0	0
20	7	30



Ron Jackson SJCF-Orientation and Assessment (Males Only)

	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
OC Spray	39	19	15
Manual Restraints	67	95	71
Assaults-Youth on Youth	96	68	46
Assaults-Youth on Staff	22	26	27

Mar-25	Apr-25	May-25
19	16	17
63	87	65
51	49	63
30	28	27



The OIO is uniquely positioned to observe trends and patterns objectively within secure facilities during site visits, record reviews, staff and youth interviews, and reviews of complaints and grievances. 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. TJJD continued to make 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 continued to observe several patterns noted in the 2nd Quarter report concerning the safety and security of the state's secured facilities. I testified in front of the Texas House of Representatives, Juvenile Justice Committee, reporting that the level of violence directed towards the staff, particularly the JCOs, was concerning. I expressed that this opinion was based on my observations, as well as the reporting by OIO staff. I reiterated that the acuity level of the youth being served by TJJD was increasing and that there was a high level of violence associated with the assaults by youth offenders on the JCOs. I stated that these factors increase the difficulty of TJJD in delivering programming to the youth committed to the department.

The OIO continued to observe serious incidents that indicated the current training curriculum or its delivery to the JCOs needed review and, more importantly, a potential revision of the program to include the following: philosophical change in youth engagement, de-escalation training, and scenario-based training utilizing role players. The OIO still observed issues with youth engagement, responsiveness from JCOs to serious incidents, and a lack of situational awareness during stressful events such as restraints. The OIO also noted that several of these issues involved a lack of oversight and concerns regarding the failure by mid-level supervision. As reported in the 2nd Quarter Report, a case study was initiated by the OIO addressing these specific topics, and the results will be reported upon 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 third 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

Austin State Hospital-*Austin TX*
North Texas State Hospital-*Wichita Falls TX*
Pegasus School RTC-*Lockhart TX*

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*
Bexar County Juvenile Detention Center-*San Antonio TX*
Brazoria County Juvenile Detention/Residential Treatment, Post-*Angleton TX*
Dallas County Youth Village-*Dallas TX*
Dallas County-HOPE-*Dallas TX*
Dallas County Residential Drug Treatment-*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 Leadership Academy-*Katy TX*
Grayson County Post-Adjudication Facility-*Denison TX*
Guadalupe County Juvenile Detention Center-*Seguin 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*
Lynn W. Ross Juvenile Detention Center-Fort Worth TX (Tarrant County)
Meurer Intermediate Sanctions Center-*Austin TX (Travis County)*
Robert N. Barnes Regional Juvenile Facility-*Corpus Christi TX (Nueces County)*
Samuel F. Santana Challenge Program-*El Paso*
San Patricio County Juvenile Center-*Sinton TX*
Solomon Casseb Jr. Webb County Youth Village-*Laredo TX*
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*
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*
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-*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*