Independent Ombudsman

for the

Texas Juvenile Justice Department

Second Quarter Report FY 26

December 1, 2025 to February 28, 2026

INTRODUCTION

This is the second Quarterly Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 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 2025 through February 2026. 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.

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. 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

Ombudsman Metrics	Q2 2026
TJJD/Contract Site Visits	25
County Post Adjudicated/Contract Facility Site Visits	69
Number of Youth Interviews Conducted	916
Hours Spent Conducting Site Visits	613
Number of Youth Interviewed	776
Hours Spent Interviewing Youth/Staff	484
Number of Miles Traveled	28,401
Number of Hours on Travel Status	1,187
Hours Spent Reviewing Video	684
Complaints	277

Complaints

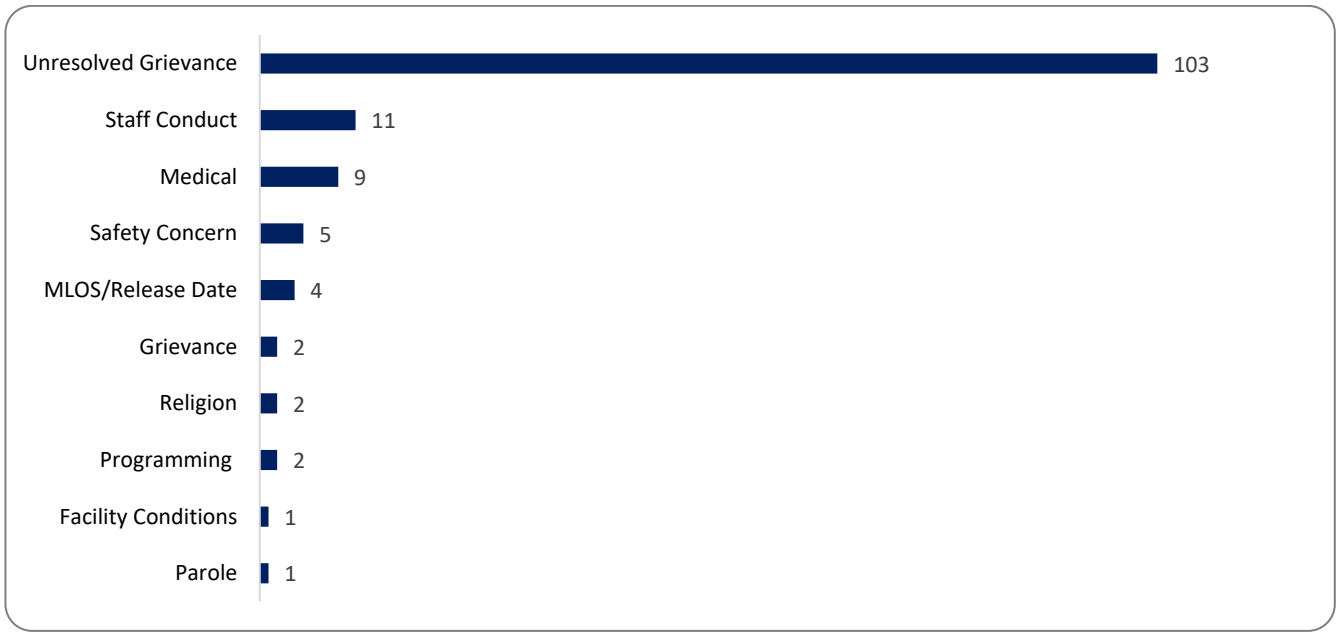
The OIO received and reviewed a total of 277 complaints in Q2 2026. A complaint is any issue regarding a youth in the custody of TJJD and a potential violation of their rights. These complaints are then examined by OIO staff to determine if the issue(s) warrant an inquiry (OIO jurisdiction), a referral to another entity (not OIO jurisdiction) or an Individual Case (in-depth inquiry of potential youth rights). Individual Cases are not opened until an initial inquiry has been conducted.

Inquiries

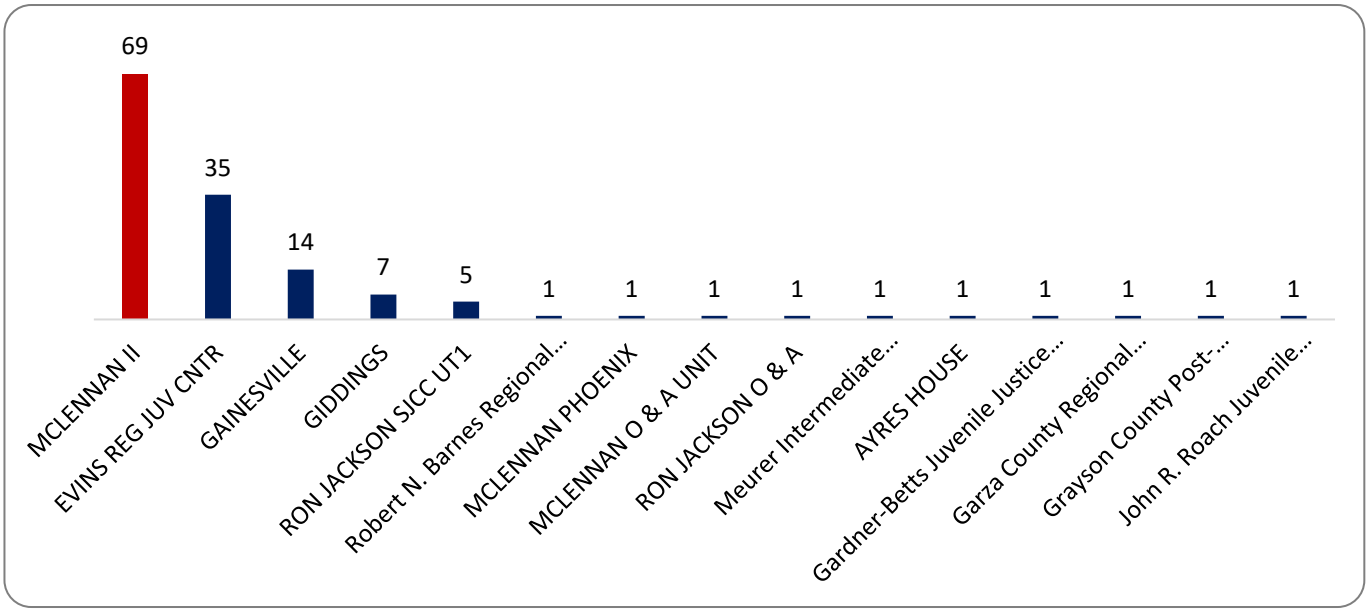
An inquiry is a review of potential youth rights violations conducted by the OIO. All inquiries are thoroughly reviewed and may include interviews of involved youth and staff, review of relevant paperwork, and video review. The OIO obtains information related to potential youth rights violations utilizing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

The OIO initiated 140 inquires during the second quarter of FY 26, 134 related to TJJD and 6 related to county post-adjudicated facilities.

Inquiries By Complaint Type



Inquiries By Facility



Individual Cases

Inquiries involving serious issues related to youth rights may be opened as an Individual Case, which entails a more in-depth review and investigation of the issues. During the second quarter of FY 26, the OIO opened 5 complaints as individual cases, all involving TJJD youth. All 5 cases were at State facilities.

Facility	Type of Complaint	Number of Individual Cases
McLennan	Medical	1
McLennan	Staff Conduct	1
McLennan	Safety Concern	1
Evins	Safety Concern	2

Origin	Right Violated	Number of Cases	Facility
Youth Phone Call/Mail	Right to Protection from Physical and Psychological Harm	2	McLennan
OIO Staff Initiated	Right to Protection from Physical and Psychological Harm	2	Evins Regional Juvenile Center
OIO Staff Initiated	Right to Medical and Dental Care	1	McLennan

Closed Individual Cases

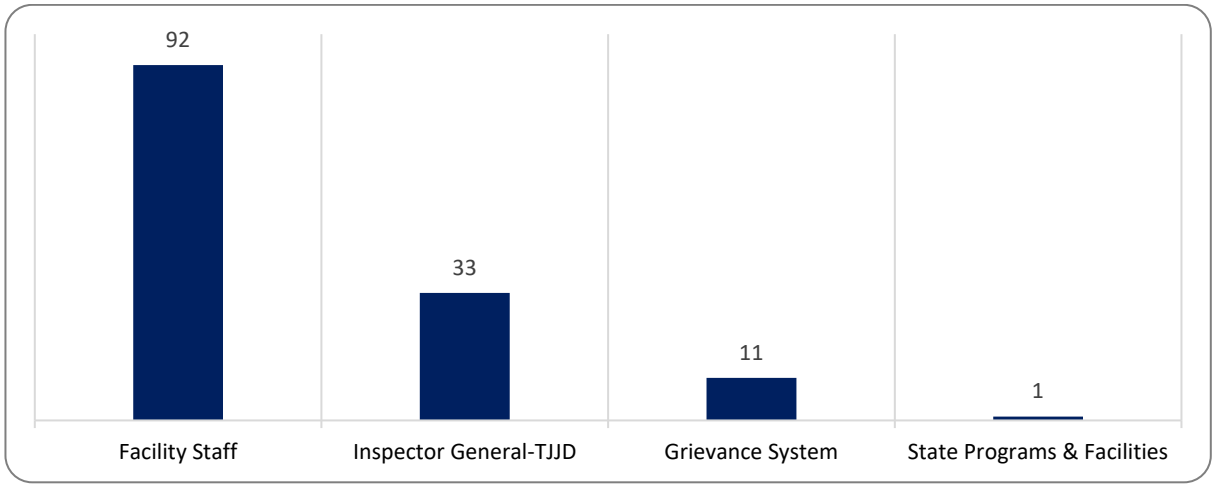
The OIO closed four individual cases involving a TJJD youth during the second quarter of FY 26.

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.

Type Of Complaint	Status	Number of Cases	Facility
Safety Concern	Sustained	3	McLennan
Safety Concern	Sustained	1	Evins

Referrals

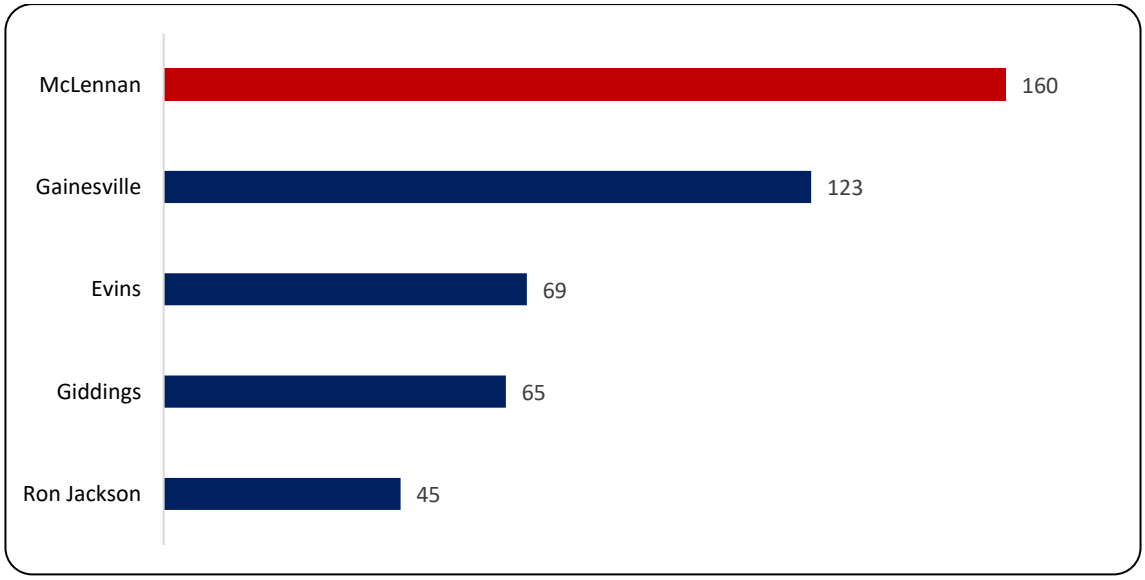
The OIO receives numerous complaints that, upon review, are either outside the scope of the OIO, a matter that should be addressed by facility staff or the grievance process, or better addressed by another agency or group. During the second quarter of FY 26, the OIO referred 137 complaints, 116 related to TJJD youth and 21 related to county post-adjudicated youth.



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.

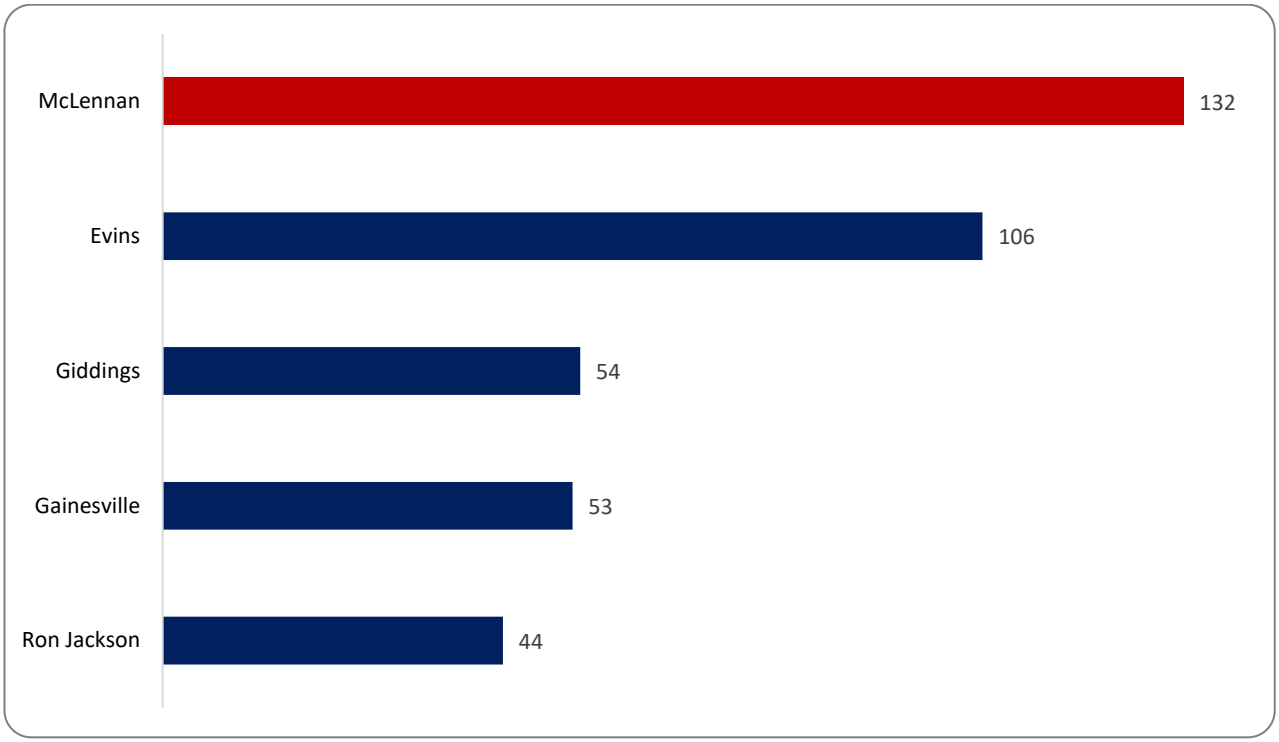


Use Of Force and Assaults

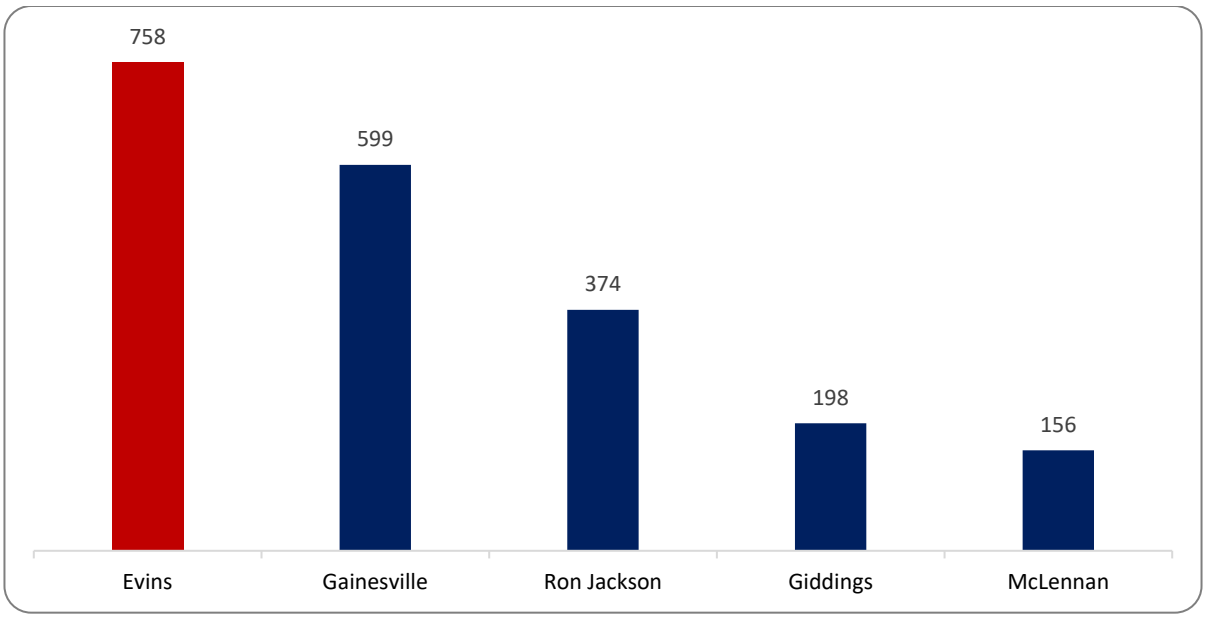
The OIO reviews, on a monthly basis, the number of incidents involving the use of OC pepper spray, the number of youth restrained, and assaults involving youth on youth and youth on staff at the secure correctional facilities. These metrics give the OIO some indication of the environment related to the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

During this reporting period, the OIO noted a discrepancy between the data on Use of Force (UOF) and Assaults reported to the Incident Reporting Center (IRC) and the same data in Connect (TJJD Youth case management system). It was determined that the file clerk at the McLennan County Correctional Facility had been experiencing difficulty in entering the UOF and assaultive behavior reports into Connect in a timely manner, resulting in a lower number of UOF and assaultive behavior issues being reported below than the number that actually occurred. TJJD took action in an attempt to address and resolve this issue, and the OIO believes the numbers will be more commensurate with actual behavior moving forward.

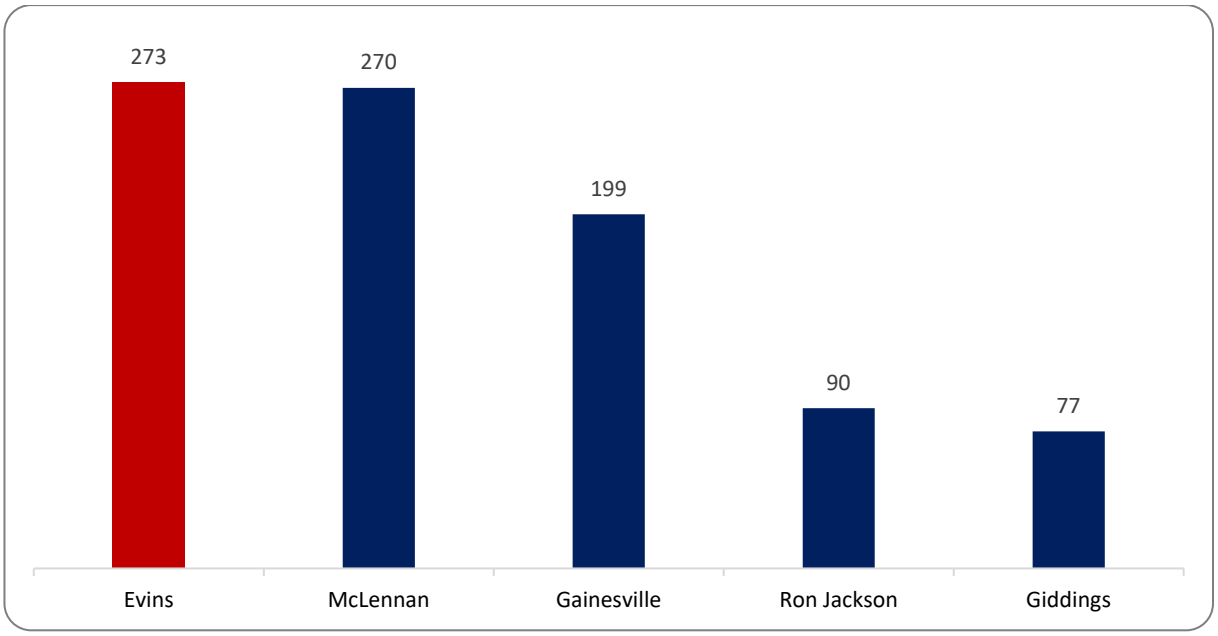
OC Spray



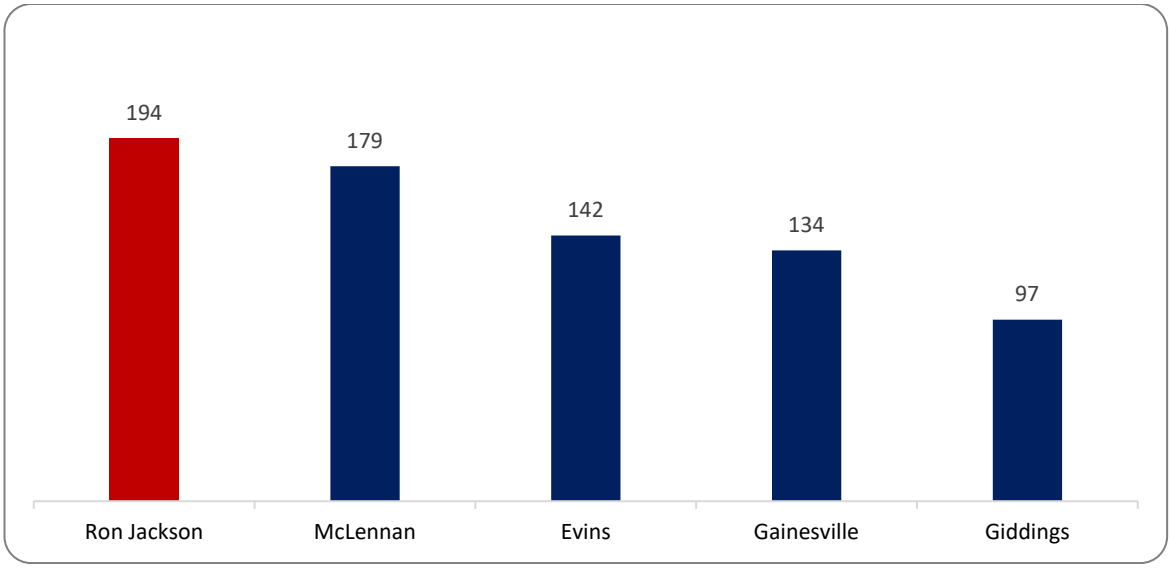
Manual Restraints



Assaults – Youth on Youth



Assaults – Youth on Staff



The OIO remains concerned about high staff turnover and staff shortages, which lead to staff fatigue and ultimately to decreased supervision of youth offenders in the state's secure facilities. TJJD has made a significant investment in hiring additional staff, particularly for the Juvenile Corrections Officer (JCO) position, and continues to seek pay raises for this and other critical positions within the department.

During this reporting period, the OIO continued to observe several patterns regarding the safety and security of the state's secured facilities. The volume and the acuity level of assaults by youth offenders on the staff, particularly the Juvenile Corrections Officers (JCO), are still and continue to be 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 still aware that this level of violence will increase the difficulty of TJJD in delivering programming to the youth committed to the department.

Potential or actual youth rights violations often occurred when staff were slow to respond or failed to respond at all. It was not generally the case that staff were over-aggressive or used excessive force in response to the various incidents.

It should be noted that the OIO has observed several instances in which TJJD staff responded appropriately and/or in a timely manner, but the number of altercations or the severity of incidents overwhelmed the staff, leading to a potential or actual youth rights violation.

During this reporting period, I ordered several Senior Ombudsmen to conduct an additional site visit of the Mart facility to review TJJD's response to serious incidents at that location based on the higher number of individual cases resulting in youth rights violations coming from that facility (68% of all Individual Cases at the time of this report). The review highlighted concerns in the following areas of serious incident response by the Mart staff: lack of employee safety equipment, missing or delayed data related to serious incidents, JCO staffing strength, training deficiencies, and facility culture/communications. This information was provided to TJJD leadership and the new superintendent at the Mart Facility.

The OIO wants to be very clear that the safety and security of the staff and youth in any state or county facility is an absolute priority for this agency. There can undoubtedly be no delivery of

quality programming (educational, behavioral, mental health, substance abuse) without the safety and security of staff and the youth who are committed to their care.

The OIO continues to examine the treatment and release process for youth from TJJD secured facilities to halfway houses and parole, as well as the supervision of these youth and the continuity of treatment services following release. During this reporting period, the OIO identified a significant number of youth assigned to parole whose (or for whom) specialized treatment requirements were waived to be completed in a community-based, less restrictive setting. However, the OIO was unable to verify the supporting waiver documentation in TJJD's database or the youths' master file. The review identified a gap between the treatment needs documented prior to release and the timely initiation of corresponding services in the community for the youth identified during the review. The OIO reported this to TJJD leadership. In response, TJJD issued a policy directive reinforcing requirements to document specialized treatment waivers and to ensure continuity of treatment services following the release of youth in the community.

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