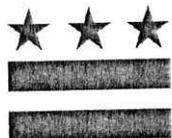


# Appendix 10



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL  
CHARLES C. MADDOX, ESQ.  
INSPECTOR GENERAL

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INSPECTIONS AND EVALUATIONS DIVISION  
***MANAGEMENT ALERT REPORT***

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
YOUTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
OAK HILL YOUTH CENTER**

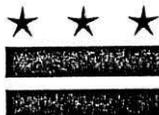
**DEFICIENCIES IN UNIT 6 (FEMALE DETAINEES)**

**MAR 03 – I - 009**  
**JANUARY 7, 2004**

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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Office of the Inspector General

Inspector General



January 7, 2004

Yvonne D. Gilchrist  
Director  
Department of Human Services  
2700 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE  
801 East Building  
Washington, DC 20032

Marceline D. Alexander  
Acting Administrator  
Youth Services Administration  
8300 Riverton Court  
Laurel, MD 20724

Dear Ms. Gilchrist and Ms. Alexander:

This is a Management Alert Report (MAR-03-I-009) to inform you of significant issues that have come to our attention as a result of our inspection of the Department of Human Services, Youth Services Administration (YSA). The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) provides these reports when we believe a serious matter requires the immediate attention of District of Columbia government officials.

**Background**

YSA houses committed and detained female residents in a separate housing unit (Unit 6) at the Oak Hill Youth Center (OHYC) in Laurel, Maryland. Unit 6 is in an isolated area approximately one mile from the OHYC Security Control Center. During a recent visit to Unit 6, the inspection team (team) observed serious deficiencies that impair the ability of Youth Correctional Officers (YCOs) to effectively maintain the safety and security of residents and to ensure their own safety as well.

## Observations

### 1. Unit 6 had only one two-way radio for use by five security officers.

Unit 6 has five YCOs on duty who provide security and supervision of female residents housed at OHYC. They escort the residents from the unit to medical appointments, court appearances, and the main secure detention facility. However, the YCOs on duty in this unit must provide 24-hour security with only one two-way radio. YCOs stated that often the radio malfunctions, leaving them unable to communicate with the security control center.

The lack of a sufficient number of two-way radios and the poor condition of the one radio on hand represent a significant threat to the general safety and security of the YCOs and residents. For example, if there were an altercation or other disturbance at Unit 6, residents and YCOs alike would be at risk of sustaining serious injuries that might be avoided if the YCOs have an adequate number of properly functioning radios with which to summon immediate assistance.

### 2. There is no telephone in the YCO security office.

It is critical that each YCO office in each housing unit has functioning telephones as backup to the two-way radios in case the radios malfunction and there is an immediate need for assistance.

The YCO security office is not equipped with a telephone. Therefore, YCOs have to rely solely on two-way radios as their only means of communication. In addition, a backup telephone system is particularly necessary in the YCO office at Unit 6 because of the current two-way radio problems in that unit as discussed above.

### 3. The doors to residents' rooms must be manually unlocked in the event of fire or other emergency, but only two YCOs have keys.

Normally, there are 8-20 female residents detained in individual rooms within the Unit 6 facility. Residents are periodically locked in their rooms during the day for a variety of reasons, such as disciplinary problems or a facility lockdown. Residents are also locked in their rooms at night during sleeping hours.

Only two of the five YCOs have keys to the individual rooms, and each door must be locked and unlocked manually. This situation creates the potential for a catastrophe if, during an emergency, the key-holders are incapacitated, and other YCOs are unable to quickly unlock the doors so residents can be moved to safety.

According to the Fire and Emergency Medical Services employee who conducts fire inspections at OHYC, the manual locks on the doors of detainees' rooms do not violate current codes or regulations. However, the inspection team remains concerned about the safety risks associated with sole reliance on a manual system that might be compromised during the chaos of a fire or other emergency.

4. **The electronic security monitoring system in Unit 6 is inoperative, and the facility's exterior lighting is inadequate.**

YSA Post Orders dated May 1992 states, "Correctional staff are to make sure that all electronic security systems are on-line, operational, and report all malfunctions to a Supervisor. The malfunction and actions taken shall be recorded in the logbook."

Although Unit 6 has security monitoring equipment in the YCO office to provide real time viewing of the hallways, recreational areas, and day-to-day operations throughout the unit, the equipment is inoperative. The team found that several cameras used for electronic monitoring were outdated and performing inadequately. YCOs stated that the electronic security system has been inoperative for several years. The lack of adequate monitoring equipment prevents proper surveillance of the secured areas, and could allow residents to escape from the facility undetected.

In addition, YCOs stated that the illumination provided by the exterior security lights in the parking area of the facility is inadequate. They fear that intruders could lie in wait in dark or inadequately lit areas around the building, and then assault them as they walk to their cars at the end of each shift.

5. **The metal detector and hand wand at the entrance of the Unit are not always activated.**

The American Correctional Association (ACA) standards for Juvenile Correction Facilities recommend the use of metal detectors at entrance gates. Unit 6 uses a walk-through metal detector similar to those found at airports, but it had not been activated when the inspection team visited. Unit 6 also has a hand wand to scan employees and visitors for metal objects, but the hand wand did not have batteries and was not being used. Consequently, visitors could bring contraband metallic objects, such as guns and knives, into the unit without detection.

6. **The YCO security office's lack of air conditioning and heating creates uncomfortable working conditions.**

ACA standards recommend that temperatures in living and work areas be appropriate to the summer and winter comfort zones, and that employees be able to mechanically raise or lower temperature and humidity to an acceptable comfort level. However, the team observed that there were no operating heating or air conditioning units in the YCO security office, which serves as the unit's command post. Consequently, YCOs often must tolerate either extreme heat or extreme cold on each shift.

7. **YCOs are not issued proper uniforms.**

YCOs are issued uniforms, which they must wear while on duty. These uniforms should be suitable for both winter and summer months. During the inspection, Unit 6 YCOs stated that they have not received winter uniforms and are forced to wear summer uniforms that are

inappropriate for the winter season. They further stated that their uniforms often are two and three sizes too large and must be altered at their own expense. Despite requests for seasonal and appropriately sized uniforms, YCOs stated that their requests have not been accommodated.

### **Recommendations**

The deficiencies cited above in the areas of communication, electronic monitoring, security lighting, metal detectors, and the work environment impede YCOs' ability to work effectively and efficiently, and create potential hazards for both YCOs and residents. Accordingly, we recommend that the YSA Administrator take the following actions immediately:

1. Ensure that each Youth Correction Officer on duty in Unit 6 has a functional two-way radio for the duration of his or her shift.
2. Ensure that a working telephone is installed in the YCO security office.
3. Ensure that all YCOs on duty have a set of keys to all locks on the unit in order to promptly unlock doors in the event of a fire or medical emergency.
4. Explore the feasibility of a central locking and unlocking system for all doors in the residential area so there can be fast egress in the event of a fire or other emergency.
5. Ensure that an emergency buzzer, direct phone line, or other notification device is connected between Unit 6 and the OHYC security control center to provide an alternative means of immediate communication in the event of an emergency.
6. Ensure that all electronic security monitoring equipment is repaired or replaced.
7. Ensure that YCOs keep the metal detector activated at all times, that batteries are installed in the hand scanner, and that the scanner is used in accordance with procedures.
8. Ensure the installation of adequate lighting for the exterior building perimeter.
9. Ensure that sufficient air conditioning and heating is provided in the YCO security office.
10. Ensure that YCOs are issued properly sized and seasonal uniforms.

Please provide your comments on this MAR by January 20, 2003. Your response should include actions taken or planned, dates for completion of planned actions, and reasons for any disagreement with the concerns and recommendations presented. Please distribute this Management Alert Report to only those personnel who will be directly involved in preparing your response. Should you have questions or desire a conference prior to preparing your response, please contact Lawrence Perry, Director of Planning and Inspections, at 202-727-8490.

MAR to Yvonne D. Gilchrist and Marceline D. Alexander  
January 6, 2003  
Page 5 of 5

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Austin A. Andersen". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Austin A. Andersen  
Interim Inspector General

AAA/lp

cc: Mr. Robert C. Bobb, City Administrator  
Carolyn Graham, Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, Families and Elders  
James Parks, Deputy Director for Administration, DHS  
Councilmember Kathleen Patterson, Chairperson, Committee on the Judiciary