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*Director*

STATE OF MARYLAND  
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL  
JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT

**SPECIAL REPORT**  
**VICTOR CULLEN CENTER**  
**JULY 20, 2009**

**Facility:** Victor Cullen Center  
6000 Cullen Road  
Sabillasville, MD 21780  
Administrator: Mark Bishop

**Reported by:** Philip J. Merson, Senior Monitor  
Tim Snyder, Monitor

**Issue Monitored:** Group Disturbance, Assaults on Staff and  
Escape

**Persons Interviewed:** Youth, Staff, Administration, Community Members,  
Washington County Township Police, Maryland State  
Police

**Date of Report:** July, 2009

## EVIDENCE

DJS Incident Report 09-73905  
MSP Report 09-51-017828  
Washington Township Police Report 09-1866  
Video Review 6/1/09  
Youth Interviews 7  
Staff Interviews 20 (Including 4 administrators and 3 professional staff)  
Community Interviews 14  
Police Interviews 4

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Special Report documents a large group disturbance at the Victor Cullen Center in which youth took control of two buildings, attacked and injured staff, and escaped from the facility. The youth were captured quickly, but staff suffered serious injuries. Several injured staff are still on medical leave more than one month after the incident.

Victor Cullen is the State's only hardware secure commitment facility for juveniles, and it should be able to provide the highest level of security for youth. However, this marks the third escape from the facility since July, 2007.<sup>1</sup>

Our investigation raises questions about whether the facility can successfully provide programming for the broad range of youth housed there. The rehabilitative program is designed for youth who can comprehend a complex peer-oriented treatment program and who are amenable to participating in the treatment program. Yet many of the youth admitted to Victor Cullen have histories of violent crime, lack empathetic skills, or have cognitive difficulties that make them inappropriate for this type of program.

Staff interviewed following the event consistently remarked that they do not have the tools to do their jobs. They said the program continues to be short-staffed, and that too many staff lack experience working with youth. Staff also said that training in de-escalation and physical restraint techniques continues to be inadequate, and that the Victor Cullen campus is a non-therapeutic environment.

As in past escapes, many neighbors did not receive notice until youth had been returned to custody. Some information provided to the public by the Department of Juvenile Services was inaccurate, prompting staff and at least one elected official to suggest that the Department had downplayed the seriousness of the incident.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Escapes of two youth on November 19, 2007 (DJS Incident Report 07-59812) and an escape of two youth on June 16, 2008, (DJS Incident Report 08-64717).

<sup>2</sup> Frederick News-Post, June 9, 2009.

The Victor Cullen program continues to struggle two years after its opening. Staff and leadership change frequently, and problems tend to be addressed by disciplining or dismissing individual staff members. Six staff members were disciplined following this event.

The Department of Juvenile Services should examine systemic issues afflicting this program and engage all staff, including those on the front lines, in developing and implementing changes that will make Victor Cullen a viable and safe program.

The investigation of this event was hampered by some DJS staff who made it difficult for Monitors to gain access to evidence and to interview youth on the campus.

### **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

On May 27 at 6:45 PM staff in Rutledge Cottage confronted a youth for staying on the telephone too long. Twenty minutes later the youth still refused to cooperate so staff disconnected the phone. The youth carried the phone from the office and assaulted a staff by elbowing him in the face.

Staff from other units responded to this assault. Their response left two cottages with only one staff each and one cottage with no staff. A video review showed that staff tried to talk with the youth but he continued to refuse to cooperate. Staff eventually attempted to physically restrain the youth in the hallway. The attempted restraint moved to the common area of the cottage and other youth observed staff trying to gain control of the youth.

Staff attempted to place mechanical restraints on the defiant youth but were unsuccessful. Other youth took the mechanical restraints and threw them down the hall. The restrained youth broke free. One staff continued to try to deal with him while the Shift Commander, staff and other youth looked on. The youth was throwing chairs and tables while staff tried to talk with him for nearly 10 minutes.

Raine Cottage is located next to Rutledge Cottage. While one of the two staff on Raine Cottage left the building to assist on Rutledge Cottage, eleven youth and one staff remained on Raine Cottage watching the incident. Several minutes later, a Raine Cottage youth attacked the lone unsuspecting staff by punching him in the side of the face, knocking him down and then hitting and stomping him. The staff was able to crawl to safety. As a result of the assault, the staff member received a broken nose, a black eye, and a head contusion. Six stitches were needed to close cuts above his eye and inside his mouth.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Maryland State Police Report 09-51-017828.

The staff who left Raine Cottage to assist returned to Raine to check on the injured staff. When she opened the door, several youth pushed out of the unit, ran to Rutledge Cottage and pounded on the door to get in.

While youth from Raine Cottage were gathered outside of Rutledge Cottage, the Shift Commander went into the Supervisor's office with another staff and locked the door. The mob of youth was screaming to be let in. The staff member standing at the door inside Rutledge Cottage said she feared that youth would take her keys or physically attack her and felt she had no choice but to let the youth inside. She unlocked the entrance door and allowed the Raine Cottage youth into Rutledge Cottage.

The same youth who had assaulted the staff on Raine Cottage immediately assaulted a staff member who was standing next to the door. The youth punched the staff member in the face, knocked him to the floor, and continued punching him while two other youth joined in punching other staff, stomping on staff with their feet, and hitting staff with mop handles and chairs. On Rutledge Cottage, one staff received a black eye and later required stitches to repair the eye injury. A second staff received a black eye, lacerations on his hand, and bruises. A third staff received cuts and contusions.<sup>4</sup>

Staff were able to leave the cottages and close the security gate to the upper campus. Staff said they feared for their lives as youth violently shook the fence, partially climbed up the fence and screamed at them. Staff went to the administration building area and when they heard that youth had breached the outer fence, they went to the entrance to the facility. They were then transported to the hospital.

At approximately 7:30 PM fourteen youth ran across the campus to the new Apprenticeship Program building. They broke into the building and removed hammers and wire cutters from the locked tool cabinet. Then they cut through the interior fence and ran across the football field to the exterior fence. The youth broke through the exterior fence and then broke into the maintenance building. Ten youth remained in the maintenance building destroying property and trying to steal several vehicles before being confronted by police at approximately 7:45 PM.

Four youth went to the railroad tracks near the facility and proceeded along the tracks for approximately 2 miles. Police from Pennsylvania observed them and a chase ensued. Police from several jurisdictions responded and apprehended the youth at approximately 8:15 PM.

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<sup>4</sup> Maryland State Police Report 09-51-017828.

Ambulance Units responded to Victor Cullen from Pennsylvania and Maryland. Six staff were taken by ambulance or drove themselves to area hospitals for treatment.

A large number of law enforcement and rescue personnel responded to this incident, including approximately 50 police units from surrounding jurisdictions in Pennsylvania and Maryland, and five K-9 units from local and State Police in Maryland. Numerous off-duty staff from Victor Cullen and other DJS administrators responded to the facility to assist in the apprehension efforts.

Thirteen of the fourteen involved youth were transferred to juvenile detention facilities. One 18-year-old was placed in adult detention.

## **FINDINGS**

### **1. Youth Admitted to Victor Cullen Are Inappropriate for the Facility's Treatment Program.**

A Positive Peer Culture (PPC) rehabilitative program is used at Victor Cullen. PPC is a complex peer-oriented treatment program. Youth who participate in PPC must be able to comprehend the nuances of the program and must be amenable to treatment.

The Department has stated that youth with violent histories or adjudications for the most serious crimes would not be sent to Victor Cullen. But many of the youth admitted to Victor Cullen do have histories of violent crime.

The 14 youth who escaped had juvenile records for a variety of crimes including arson, carjacking, robbery, first and second-degree assault, assault on police officers, sex offenses, possession of controlled substance with intent to distribute, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and escape.

Many youth at Victor Cullen do not have the cognitive ability to successfully participate in PPC. During the investigation of this incident, the Monitor's Office examined a random sample of 15 of 32 files of youth enrolled in the program. One-third of the youth in the sample had IQ's in the range of Borderline Intellectual Functioning or Mental Retardation.<sup>5</sup> Youth with poor cognitive processing abilities have difficulty with the abstract nature of the Positive Peer Culture program.

It is not clear whether specific admission criteria for Victor Cullen exist. For the past six months, the Monitor's Office has requested copies of Victor Cullen admission criteria from DJS without success. The Department has not

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<sup>5</sup> Four youth had IQ's in the range of Borderline Intellectual Functioning (between 70 and 86) and one was in the Mental Retardation range (IQ below 70).

responded to JJMU's most recent written request to the Region 3 (Western Maryland) Director on June 16, 2009.

Two of the youth who behaved most violently during this incident had violent histories. The youth who began the disturbance has been involved in 25 serious incidents since being in DJS custody. From January 1 through March 9 of 2009, he was involved in five (5) group disturbances while in detention at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center. In the March 9 incident, he choked another youth while staff struggled with him.<sup>6</sup>

After admission to Victor Cullen, he was charged with assault on a staff member on April 9.<sup>7</sup>

The youth who instigated subsequent violence on Raine Cottage is a known gang member with a history of violence in DJS facilities. He broke another youth's nose in an unprovoked fight at Victor Cullen on February 6.<sup>8</sup>

Interviewed staff said the youth was "fronting" his way through the program waiting for an opportunity such as this to perpetuate more violence. Several weeks before the escape, approximately 30 staff signed a petition asking that administrators sanction the youth for his previous behavior. Nevertheless, he received a 72-hour home pass three days before the incident occurred.

## **2. Victor Cullen Has Not Established a Safe Therapeutic "Culture."**

In institutional settings, culture is defined as the "values, assumptions, and beliefs that leadership and staff hold in common and ultimately define the way the institution functions." <sup>9</sup> In the two years since its opening, Victor Cullen has been unable to establish a positive therapeutic culture. Many factors, including multiple leadership changes, staff shortages, lack of clinical staff, and staff failure to understand the rehabilitative model, have contributed to the difficulties.

Staff interviewed following this incident said the Victor Cullen culture inappropriately gives control over to youth and actively undermines safety, security and the treatment process. Statements made to investigators by staff include:

- Staff do not have control over youth at the facility. Youth call other staff foul names and no action is taken.
- Some youth fail to comply with facility norms and do not face consequences. Some youth repeatedly fail to follow through with programming expectations but are allowed to remain in the facility.

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<sup>6</sup> DJS ASSIST Database; DJS Incident Reporting Database, Incident Report 71696.

<sup>7</sup> DJS Incident Report 72539.

<sup>8</sup> DJS Incident Report 70854.

<sup>9</sup> Corcoran, Randy, Changing Prison Culture, Corrections Today (April, 2005).

- Staff are inconsistent in their interactions with youth because the program culture is not well-established.
- Youth are supplied with inappropriately violent and sexualized music, movies, and other media. Many inappropriate music CD's have been provided to youth by a staff member.
- Sometimes youth turn up inappropriate music with profanity so loud staff that cannot hear their radios. Staff do not address this because the youth will get upset.
- Staff feel unsafe because the guidelines on de-escalation and restraint are unclear.
- More structured programming is needed, particularly on the weekends. Youth spend too much time playing cards and gambling.

Youth on Youth Assaults nearly doubled between January – May, 2008 and January – May, 2009 - another indication that staff does not have the tools to create a safe environment at Victor Cullen. The population increased from an average of 34 to 44 between these time periods, an increase of 29%. Yet Youth on Youth Assaults increased from 14 to 27 (an increase of 93%).

### **3. Staffing Issues Continue.**

In interviews, staff continue to complain about lack of training, staff shortages, and excessive overtime hours. Statements to investigators include:

- Staff need more training. Crisis Intervention Techniques and Behavior Management Plans are not taught consistently enough to ensure staff have a thorough understanding of how to deal with inappropriate behavior.
- More staff are needed, particularly during evening hours. At the time of this incident, two staff persons were trying to supervise youth in showers, monitor youth outside of showers, and provide telephone calls.
- Staff must work significant overtime both after their shift is over and before their shift begins just to transition from and to work assignments.<sup>10</sup>
- DJS has not dealt with the traumatic effects of this event on both staff and youth. Even the ambulance drivers were so afraid that they fled the facility. Continued debriefings in which staff are required to watch video of the incident is not helping.
- The Department minimized the extent of injuries to staff by making public statements that injuries were limited to bruises and cuts when they were more serious.
- Punishment of individual staff members (six staff members were disciplined) has worsened staff morale. The Department should examine

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<sup>10</sup> The AFSCME staff union is reportedly in negotiations with DJS to have the schedules prepared in compliance with the collective bargaining process.

the bigger picture at Victor Cullen and determine why these problems persist.

### **Youth Witnesses**

Seven youth from Raine and Rutledge Cottages who did not participate in the violence and escape were interviewed. Most of the youth hid in closets or other rooms during the melee. They said they felt afraid for their own lives if they tried to intervene. While some youth said they were generally fearful of some of the youth involved, they all said they felt safe with the population of youth and staff once those youth were removed from the facility.

In interviews, youth on Raine Cottage said that gang issues played some role in the disturbance. They said that the youth who assaulted staff on Raine Cottage saw what was happening to his “crew members” on Rutledge Cottage and blurted out, “I’m going to hit somebody” right before punching staff in the face. Youth said the assaulting youth grabbed the injured staff’s radio and shouted into it, “You got our youth and we got your staff!”

Youth stated they needed more structured activities after school and on weekends. They said all they normally do is sit around and play cards.

#### **4. Communication with the Public Continues to Be Inadequate.**

According to the DJS website:

*“The CityWatch Community Alert Notification System is a comprehensive solution designed to enhance communication efforts between the Department, local law enforcement, emergency management offices and targeted groups of residents, businesses, and internal staff. The purpose of the system is to quickly and reliably disseminate critical information.... In the event that there is an emergency at a facility, you will receive an automated telephone call....”*

In interviews, residents of the surrounding community said they were not notified of the escape or were notified after the youth were already in custody. According to the DJS Assistant Secretary, the Facility Administrator is the only person who can activate the community notification system. When he arrived on the scene, police would not allow him inside the administration building for safety reasons. At 8:15 PM, the Assistant Secretary contacted DJS Headquarters to activate the alert system, but by that time the escaped youth had been apprehended. The Monitor’s Office received notice of a possible escape at 8:32 PM, almost twenty minutes after the last youth had been taken into custody.

One Monitor spoke to 12 local residents and business owners from the area just north of the facility. None of those interviewed heard the siren. Three of the 12 were on the CityWatch Notification System and said they were notified of the possible escape between 8:45 PM and 9:00 PM. A resident south of the facility also complained that he was not notified of the escape until the following day.<sup>11</sup> Most community members said they were notified through word of mouth after the incident was over.

One of those notified at 8:45 PM was the Chief of the Washington Township Police Department. He said that he contacted his station when he received the alert at his residence and his officers advised him they had already made apprehension and cleared the scene.

DJS Secretary Devore called a community meeting for June 8. Administrators apologized for the incident, thanked police for their quick response and promised to learn from their mistakes. DJS staff discussed steps being taken to correct problems:

- All tools were removed from the facility,
- The fence was repaired and perimeter security tightened,
- Staff would receive additional training.

The Frederick County Sheriff said that the police response went well, but he was concerned by what he saw on the video of the incident and the type of youth who were being committed to the facility. The Sheriff said he felt DJS had downplayed the seriousness of the incident.<sup>12</sup>

When asked to elaborate, the Sheriff said he was part of the initial meetings about reopening Victor Cullen and there was a promise that violent youth would not be committed there. He said that was not what he saw in the video. He saw violent youth who should not have been placed there.

Numerous citizens reported not hearing the alert siren.

The Maryland State Police Commander of the Frederick Barrack stated that State Troopers are highly trained with their firearms and they keep them on when they enter the facility. This is not a sound policy. Youth can assault troopers the same way they assaulted staff – then they would have access to a handgun. Police should unload and store weapons when they enter juvenile residential facilities, just as they do in adult correctional facilities.

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<sup>11</sup> Frederick News-Post, May 29, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## AFTERWORD

The investigation of this event was hampered by some DJS staff. Throughout this investigation, DJS made it difficult for Monitors to gain access to evidence and to interview youth on the campus. The Monitor's Office is required by law to report on youth safety and security in DJS facilities and should not be impeded in fulfilling its statutory duties.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Admissions

1. DJS assessment professionals should assess youth and then work with facility administrators before accepting them into the Victor Cullen program to ensure adaptability to the Positive Peer Culture program and amenability to treatment.

### Programming and Culture

1. Victor Cullen's population should be reduced to youth who are amenable to the treatment program. Emphasis should be placed on creating a stable staffing complement, training staff, developing teamwork, providing consistency for youth, and improving communication.
2. PPC groups should ideally not be larger than 10 and preferably 8, especially with more difficult youth, to achieve fidelity to the PPC model.
3. Youth who repeatedly fail to follow through appropriately with the programming at the facility should be removed for the benefit of the other youth and staff.
4. Staff must be in control of the facility. Staffing numbers and quality should be appropriate for the type of youth on the cottage. More violent and aggressive youth need strong staff who have good relationships with the youth they are supervising.
5. The Department should consider designating cottages for youth with special treatment needs, including low intellectual functioning, and providing specially trained staff and programming for these cottages as it has by designating one cottage for youth with substance abuse treatment needs.
6. Youth should not have access to violent or sexualized music, movies, or reading materials or media which includes inappropriate language.

7. The use of the telephone by youth should be consistent and closely monitored.
8. The facility has the capability to simulcast movies to all cottages from the technical control building. Movies with appropriate content should be simulcast throughout the facility for youth who achieve special privileges such as “movie night.”

### **Staffing**

1. The Department must provide additional training for staff. Staff should be well-versed in proper crisis intervention techniques.
2. Staff should know when restraint of youth is appropriate. Appropriate restraint should be taught and consistently practiced.
3. Two staff are needed during shower time. If youth make phone calls at the same time as showers, a third staff is needed to monitor the calls or youth need to stay in their rooms.
4. A single staff member should never be left alone on a cottage with youth.

### **Safety and Security Measures**

1. DJS must develop a reliable system of community notification to meet the safety needs of the public surrounding the facility.
2. Staff should have panic alarms.
3. Bedroom doors should have both manual and electronic locking devices for the safety and security of staff and youth.
4. Shoes should be collected and stored when not in use. Youth should not have access to their shoes at night or when they are a threat for escape.

### **Other**

1. DJS should instruct law enforcement personnel to leave their firearms in their cars or provide a safe weapon lockbox outside the facility to prevent any possibility of youth gaining access to firearms inside the facility.



Maryland Department of  
**Juvenile Services**  
Treating • Supporting • Protecting

**July 17, 2009**

**DJS Response to Victor Cullen Special Report of July 2, 2009**

Following an escape from Victor Cullen on May 27, all youth were safely apprehended within one hour and without further incident through the prompt response and efforts of law enforcement in coordination with Victor Cullen staff.

This response clarifies or corrects certain information in the JJMU Special Report. The response also provides information concerning how DJS maintains a high priority focus on ensuring a safe and effective treatment program for youth and a safe environment for our dedicated staff at Victor Cullen Center (VCC).

As is always the case, we are happy to discuss these and any other concerns of the JJMU and we appreciate the opportunity to respond.

Special Report: Executive Summary at pages 2-3

The JJMU asserts that their investigation was hampered by some DJS staff.<sup>13</sup> This assertion is absolutely incorrect. To the contrary, DJS ensures that JJMU monitors are consistently afforded very broad access to our facilities, youth and staff. The JJMU monitors had access to Victor Cullen on every day that they arrived at the facility to examine this incident, including May 28, June 1, June 2, June 9, June 11 and June 25. DJS provided JJMU with access to all of the materials that they requested, including the videotape of the incident and the written incident report. The JJMU also conducted interviews with youth and staff at Victor Cullen.

DJS cooperated with law enforcement to ensure the youth involved in the incident were first interviewed by the police as part of their investigation. A criminal case may be hampered by witnesses who have been interviewed multiple times before police speak to them. The JJMU were informed that the Maryland State Police wished to have first access to youth for investigative purposes and it was noted that the JJMU respected this request.

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<sup>13</sup> The statutory authority of the JJMU identifies their role and function as monitors, not investigators.

The JJMU recommends that DJS examine systemic issues concerning Victor Cullen. DJS regional and central office administrators have been actively involved with Victor Cullen staff in examining the escape incident itself as well as underlying, system issues. All Victor Cullen staff are participating in regular forums to address and contribute to resolution of issues.

Special Report: Statement of Facts at page 4

According to medical documentation received by DJS and contrary to the JJMU report, no staff suffered a broken nose as a result of this incident.

The youth traveled about one mile from the facility before their apprehension by law enforcement, not two miles as reported by the JJMU.

Special Report: Findings at page 5

The JJMU indicates that youth involved in the incident had histories of “violent” offenses and provides as evidence a listing of offenses. Some of the offenses identified by the JJMU are alleged offenses, not adjudicated offenses. As the JJMU is aware, youth may be charged with offenses but are not found facts sustained (guilty) of those charges. For example, the JJMU identifies “arson” as a charge, but that charge was dismissed; the charge of “assault on police” was adjudicated as “resisting arrest” (Assault on Police is a separate and more serious offense altogether); and a “carjacking” charge was not sustained in court. A youth’s juvenile record is that for which he has been found facts sustained.

Special Report: Safe Therapeutic Culture at page 6

The JJMU assert that some youth repeatedly fail to follow through with programming expectations but are allowed to remain in the facility.

Youth may struggle to comply and cooperate with program expectations as part of the process of adjustment to a new, structured placement that requires accountability and responsibility for behavior, such as Victor Cullen. As part of the therapeutic process, VCC continues to work with and provide treatment for difficult youth. These youth can demonstrate progress in the program and accomplish the goals established by the treatment team. Victor Cullen has at times determined that the program is not appropriate for a youth and has removed him from the facility. With all due consideration for the safety of youth, staff and the public, Victor Cullen does make every effort to intervene and facilitate youths’ successful completion of the program.

The JJMU identifies that a youth involved in the escape was charged with staff assault after his admission to Victor Cullen. This youth was charged with staff assault – the facility focuses on youth accountability for behavior – but for clarification of the assault charge, he had thrown milk on a staff member.

The JJMU asserts that staff had signed a petition seeking sanctions for another youth involved in the escape “several weeks” before the incident. This is misleading. What actually occurred several *months* before the escape is that staff did advocate that the youth not be advanced to a higher level in the positive peer culture program. The home pass that this youth received was not then an issue. However, a committee at Victor Cullen, including line staff, meets regularly to recommend whether youth should receive home passes, and this staff committee recommended that the youth involved in the incident *should* receive a home pass.

As to the availability and volume of music and movies at the facility, all movies are rated PG-13 or G. VCC continues to conduct random searches and confiscates any CD that is not approved for viewing by youth.

JJMU indicates that staff should receive restraint training. Victor Cullen staff is required to participate in Crisis Prevention and Management (CPM) training at least two times per year.

We agree that more structured programming would be beneficial. The facility has reduced the time students play cards and are continuing to offer creative programming including gang awareness/prevention and arts activities. A Victor Cullen staff committee is currently examining additional programming options.

The JJMU assert that the population at the facility increased from an average of 34 to 44 youth between January and May 2008 and 2009, an increase of 29% and that Youth on Youth Assaults increased from 14 to 27. DJS data indicate that the number of students in the facility at the end of each month in 2008 was as follows: January 08 - 27 youth, February 08 - 29 youth, March 08 - 30 youth, April 08- 28 youth, May 08 - 31 youth. This is an average of 29 youth in 2008 not 34.

Special Report: Staffing Issues Continue at page 7

The assertion that DJS has not addressed the traumatic effects of this incident on staff is simply incorrect. DJS arranged for an opportunity for staff to meet with a DJS staff psychologist as well as with a private mental health provider with significant juvenile detention experience, soon after this incident. Staff was also provided with an opportunity to seek assistance from the DJS Employee Assistance Program.

The JJMU asserts that discipline of staff worsens morale. Through a thorough investigative process, DJS concluded that some staff violated the DJS Standards of Conduct. DJS cannot ignore individual staff actions when security is violated and does take appropriate action, including disciplinary action as warranted. DJS also recognized staff for their excellent performance involving this incident. At the same time, the facility is working diligently with our Professional Development and Training Unit to ensure that staff needing further safety and security training receive that training.

Re: Communication with the Public at page 8

The JJMU assertion that DJS did not notify community members about the escape is erroneous.

The JJMU reports that 14 community members were interviewed about whether they were notified of the escape, and states that “residents of the surrounding community said they were not notified of the escape or were notified after the youth were already in custody.” However, the JJMU later writes that 12 persons were interviewed and later discloses that only 3 of those 12 community members were on the DJS CitiWatch Community Notification System.

DJS established and maintains a Community Notification System and broadly advertises the option for residents to complete a brief registration process to receive alerts. A total of 430 people were registered on the Victor Cullen Community Notification System at the time of the May 27 escape.

It is fortunate that law enforcement and DJS response led to quick recovery of the youth, and DJS will review the alert system to improve in any way possible the promptness of the alerts. DJS also alerts the community through sounding of a siren. At the community meeting chaired by Secretary DeVore shortly after the escape, only one community member indicated they could not hear the siren, but the strong consensus of the individuals in attendance at the meeting was that the siren was clearly audible.

The community meeting chaired by the Secretary was well attended and was an open discussion about the event and DJS’ multi-layered responses to it. This open communication by the agency exactly reflects the transparency approach consistently taken by DJS.

Re: Recommendations at page 10

**Admissions:** Two DJS assessment professionals do assess youth and they interact regularly with VCC administrators. The Clinical Director and Superintendent have been involved on numerous occasions for appeals and special cases when applicable.

**Staffing:** Staff is never left alone unless an emergency situation arises. There are two staff per cottage (a 1:6 ratio), a campus supervisor, a rover staff and master control staff who monitor video surveillance; this is sufficient staff to successfully provide treatment in a safe and secure environment.