

Presentation to the
2019 Senate Human Services Committee

FOLLOW UP ON CONCERNS ABOUT FOSTER YOUTH IN COUNTY OPERATED PROGRAMS

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County Operated Facilities

A list of concerns was communicated to DHS on April 17, 2019 including:

- Strip searches
- Searches of personal belongings
- Children being locked into jail cells
- Deprivation of access to bathrooms
- Inadequate hygiene supplies and clothing
- Client on client abuse and harassment
- Limited access to personal property
- Inadequate educational opportunities
- Inadequate access to warm showers
- Inability to come and go, choose time for showers and ready access to food

DHS Program Visits Overview

Programs Locations:

Multnomah, Lincoln, Douglas and Josephine counties currently house and care-for DHS referred children in county-operated programs.

Visit Overview:

The facilities where children are served were toured, and program personnel and children in care were interviewed regarding the concerns.

Douglas County

Douglas operates three separate facilities that house and care for DHS placed youth: River Rock, Creekside and Fowler House.

Youth from all three sites were interviewed. (7 youth total)

- **Search practices** – No strip searches.
 - River Rock and Fowler House will continue to only conduct searches when youth return from a run, because there is not currently a heightened concern about potentially harmful objects being brought into the facilities as there is at the Creekside site.
 - Creekside, where there has been a concern about residents returning from off-site school or off-site visits with items later used for self-harm, residents undress in private, change into a gown and give their clothing to staff to be searched for potentially harmful objects.

Douglas County

- **Searches of personal belongings** - Room searches don't happen unless there is reason to believe that contraband has entered a facility, and only rooms belonging to those suspected of having contraband are searched. This is consistent across all three sites.
- **Children being locked into room** - All youth interviewed denied ever being locked in their rooms.
- **Deprivation of access to bathrooms**
All youth interviewed denied any restriction on access to bathrooms.



Douglas County

- **Inadequate hygiene supplies and clothing** - All youth interviewed indicated they had easy and unlimited access to hygiene supplies. Potentially hazardous items, like clippers or grooming products containing alcohol or potentially intoxicating chemicals, are kept secure but can be checked out as needed.
- **Client on client abuse and harassment** - All youth interviewed indicated staff respond effectively to conflicts between youth or bullying. Physical interventions are rare, and staff are skilled at de-escalating situations before they get out of hand.
- **Limited access to personal property** - It was evident from touring the facilities that residents have sufficient personal items and unlimited access to their personal property. Resident's reported having i-pods for music, and the programs are in the process of transitioning to allowing residents to have cell phones. Most bedrooms had televisions, and many had video game consoles.



Douglas County

- **Inadequate educational opportunities** - Education is provided by the local school district. Teachers come to the facilities in the morning, and in the afternoon residents and teachers go to an off-site school called “Phoenix”, where they remain until late afternoon and eat dinner before returning to the facilities.
- **Inadequate access to warm showers** - Residents indicated that the showers have adequate hot water. One resident at Creekside indicated that sometimes after multiple residents have showered in succession, hot water sometimes runs low, but she said that access to showers isn’t restricted, so a shower can be taken later if/when the hot water supply returns.
- **Inability to come and go, choose time for showers, ready access to food** - The facilities are not locked, and residents are not prevented from leaving, however unauthorized runs from the facilities result in restrictions on privileges. Residents interviewed indicated they have regular group community outings.



Josephine County

One DHS-placed youth was interviewed, as she was the only DHS youth placed at the program on the day of the visit.

- **Search practices** - Program doesn't conduct strip searches and search policy doesn't include searches that involve removal of clothing. The resident interviewed indicated she had never been strip-searched or asked to remove clothing as part of a search.
- **Searches of personal belongings** - Personal belongings are searched at admission to ensure no contraband enters the facility.



Josephine County

- **Children being locked into room** - Children are not locked in their rooms. The resident interviewed denied ever being locked in her room.
- **Deprivation of access to bathrooms** - Access to bathrooms is not restricted. The resident interviewed denied ever being prevented from accessing the bathroom.
- **Inadequate hygiene supplies and clothing** - The resident interviewed indicated she has access to all hygiene supplies and has plenty of clothes.
- **Client on client abuse and harassment** - The resident interviewed said she felt safe in the program and that she's enjoyed being there.
- **Limited access to personal property** – Residents have free access to the personal items they bring with them to the facility. The facility has i-pods and DVD players available for residents.



Josephine County

- **Inadequate educational opportunities** - Residents attend school on-site. Some youth attend public school.
- **Inadequate access to warm showers** - Residents shower daily, and there is plenty of hot water.
- **Inability to come and go, choose time for showers, ready access to food** - The resident interviewed confirmed residents participate in frequent community outings. The resident praised the food at the program and said there were healthy between-meal snacks available. Residents shower daily.



Lincoln County

Two of four DHS placed youth were interviewed.

- **Search practices** - Resident's denied ever experiencing a strip-search or pat-down search at the program. Staff always search backpacks when youth return to the facility from the community. Staff may also have youth turn out pockets or remove jacket or outerwear if there is suspicion of contraband, but this is not routine.
- **Searches of personal belongings** - Residents reported their rooms have never been searched. Policy allows for room searches, and program personnel indicated these typically occur when there is reason to suspect contraband has been brought into the facility. All personal items are searched and inventoried at admission.



Lincoln County

- **Children being locked into room** - The facility is not locked, and residents are never locked in their rooms.
- **Deprivation of access to bathrooms** - The site has multiple bathrooms, and access is never restricted.
- **Inadequate hygiene supplies and clothing** - Residents report they have plenty of hygiene supplies and easy access to them. Residents report they have plenty of clothes.
- **Client on client abuse and harassment** - Residents denied experiencing or witnessing any bullying or harassment at the program.



Lincoln County

- **Limited access to personal property** - Residents denied having limited access to their personal property. Program practice is to secure cell phones while youth are present at the facility and return them to youth when they go to school or work.
- **Inadequate educational opportunities** - Both residents indicated they attend Siletz High School.
- **Inability to come and go, choose time for showers, ready access to food** - Residents indicate they are away from the facility for most of the day for school and after-school work. They have frequent community outings for recreation. They have regular meals and unlimited access to snacks. They can take showers whenever they wish.



Multnomah County

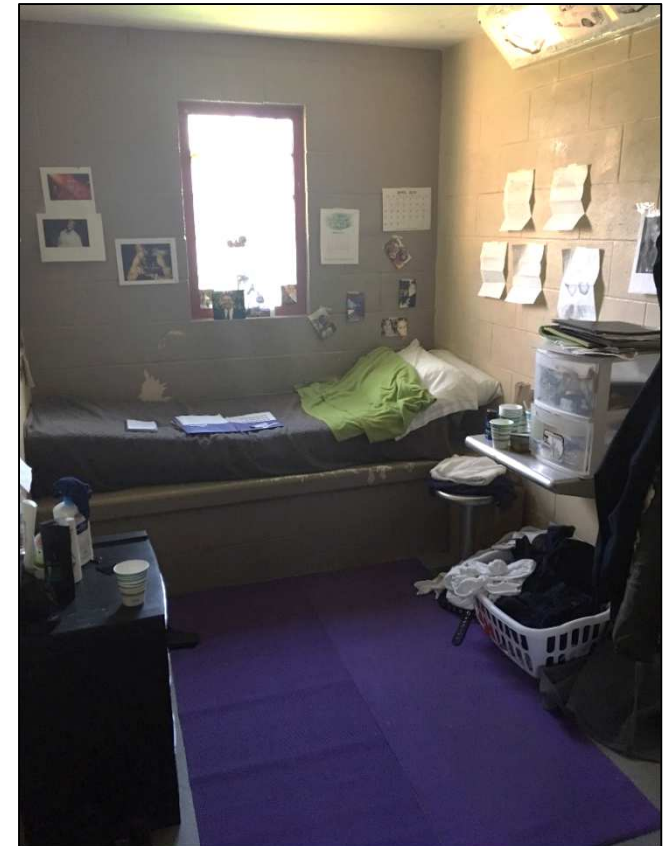
Two DHS placed youth were interviewed.*

- **Search practices** - Residents indicated they have never been strip-searched. Program policy requires pat-down searches at admission and when a resident returns from an unsupervised off-site visit or pass. Policy allows for searches, in certain circumstances, that involve residents removing clothing except undergarments.
- **Searches of personal belongings** - Program policy allows for room searches at random times or when there is reason to believe that contraband or restricted items are in the facility.
- **Children being locked into room** - Residents denied ever being locked in their rooms, and the program's policy prohibits it.

*The other DHS youth currently in care was participating the program's culinary program at the time of the visit and wasn't available to be interviewed.

Multnomah County

- **Deprivation of access to bathrooms** - Residents denied ever being restricted from bathrooms.
- **Inadequate hygiene supplies and clothing** - Residents indicated they had enough clothing and hygiene supplies. Program policy does include reasonable limits on the quantity of clothing and personal items
- **Client on client abuse and harassment** - Residents indicated conflicts and fights do occur, but staff are responsive and intervene effectively when these occur.
- **Limited access to personal property** - Program does limit the type and quantity of items brought into the facility, but residents have unrestricted access to the items they have at the program.



Multnomah County

- **Inadequate educational opportunities** - Students attend on-site school operated by Multnomah Education Service District and staffed by licensed teachers. One of the youths interviewed indicated the school seemed disorganized because youth are at different levels and not all working on the same things at the same time.
- **Inadequate access to warm showers** - Residents indicated They have access to showers in the morning and afternoon and there is plenty of hot water.
- **Inability to come and go, choose time for showers, ready access to food** - The facility is secure, so residents can't come and go at will. The program schedule includes supervised community outings and on-site recreation. There's a gymnasium on site. Residents report there are opportunities to shower in the morning before school and again in the afternoon following scheduled time in the gym. Residents are served 3 meals per day with scheduled snack-times in the afternoon and evening.



Questions?

Thank you



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