

## **TYC Response To Letter to DOJ**

The Texas Youth Commission has worked collaboratively with Advocacy, Inc. and Texas Appleseed along with many other advocacy groups during the past three years. TYC is taking this letter and the concerns presented in it seriously, and will work to fully investigate any allegations in the letter. We will continue to work collaboratively with the advocacy groups on behalf of all youth committed to TYC.

### **Safety of youth**

The safety and security of our youth and staff is a top priority for the agency. TYC has taken specific steps in reducing youth assaultive behavior and violence through staff training and implementation of evidence-based programs. This effort has been very successful as evidenced by a **61 percent reduction in youth assaults involving bodily injuries during the past year**. TYC has and enforces a zero tolerance policy for any type of mistreatment or abuse.

### **Security referrals**

Security referrals are used as a last resort and at the end of the behavioral intervention continuum. Only one-third of all security referrals are ultimately admitted to security units. All medical, education, and specialized treatment is provided to youth while in security. Additionally, all security units are staffed with case managers on morning and evening shifts to provide counseling and assessment of youth readiness to return to their dorms and regular programming.

### **Educational programming**

Over past 12 months, TYC has made significant improvements in its educational programming. For example, the number of minutes in a school day have increased to a uniform 420 minutes, provided full academic course offerings for a high school diploma and vocational training and credit recovery. The letter cites a 2008 report on educational deficiencies, but fails to mention the 2010 TEA review that cleared the agency of previous deficiencies.

Principals who have extensive experience (20 years on average) working with at-risk kids have been hired at these facilities and all but one school are now meeting state requirements for attendance. This is a significant improvement from past years.

### **Mental health treatment and staffing**

TYC has focused on both the quality and quantity of specialized treatment available to meet the needs of youth. In all cases, staff who deliver these programs are appropriately credentialed, licensed and supervised by an individual licensed to provide clinical supervision. During the past six months, a UTMB psychiatrist sees patients at Corsicana State School approximately 30 hours per week.

TYC and UTMB adopted a formulary plan in February 2010. The plan uses best medical and mental health treatment practices. Some key indicators of successful implementation:

- a decline in the use of antipsychotics
- a 90 percent decline in the use of antipsychotics as a sleeping aid
- a 70 percent decline in the use of Seroquel (antipsychotic with high abuse potential)