BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor

RICHARD WHITLEY, MS
Director

KELLY WOOLDRIDGE
Administrator

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
560 Mill St., Suite 250
Reno, NV 89502
Telephone 775-688-1421 • Fax 775-688-2662
http://dcfs.nv.gov

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 30, 2016

TO: Ross Armstrong, Deputy Administrator

FROM: Tyler Peterson, Assistant Superintendent

RE: State of Nevada Juvenile Correctional Facilities Escape Task Force Report

State of Nevada Juvenile Correctional Facilities Escape Task Force Report

A task force was assembled to address the rise in escape attempts from State of Nevada juvenile facilities. Attempts and successful elopements from the Nevada Youth Training Center (NYTC) and the Caliente Youth Center (CYC) were reviewed by the team. Based on this review, we identified areas for improvement, and discussed procedures already in place by the individual facilities prior to the task force convening.

Overview of Recent Escapes

Nevada Youth Training Center

In March of 2016, NYTC experienced four escapes by five youth during a ten day period.

1. Two of the youth made multiple attempts during this time period, with a different partner each time. One of these attempts was successful.

2. One escape was by a lone youth. A situation escalated on the dorm, the staff attempted to prevent the escape with a Use of Force but was unable to stop the youth. The youth later returned to the facility on his own without incident.

3. Two escapes and one attempted escape occurred after the sun had gone down.

4. No attempt involved more than two youth at a time.

The details above help identify interventions necessary to mitigate the risk for youth attempting to escape in the future.

1. NYTC administration and supervisors appropriately addressed each incident with training and direction for the staff involved following the incident.

2. Debriefing was sent out in a facility wide email, so that all staff at the facility could learn from the incidents and carry out their duties in a way that mitigates the risk of youth attempting to escape.

3. NYTC also developed a protocol where all youth turn their shoes into staff for the night time hours.

4. Following the escapes, NYTC applied for modifications of placements for all three youth. All three applications were approved and the youth were transferred to Summit View Youth Center

Caliente Youth Center

The Caliente Youth Center has not experienced a significant number of escapes in the last couple years. The most recent are October of 2014 and January of 2016. These two events are concerning due to the nature of the incidents. In both situations, youth preplanned physical attacks on staff with the intent to incapacitate them, destroy their communication systems, and leave the facility before they could call for help or notify staff members of the event.

1. October 2014: Two youth attacked staff in the dayroom for Beowawe Cottage. This attack caused substantial bodily harm. The youth were apprehended approximately an hour later just off the facility grounds in the bushes and trees. This incident occurred while many youth were off grounds watching the local high school football game. Staffing ratios were appropriate on grounds, but given the event, the youth knew there would be less staff available to immediately respond.

2. January 2016: Nine youth escaped the facility during a graveyard shift. This was a preplanned attack on the supervising staff with the intent to incapacitate him and the communication systems so that he would not be able to call for assistance or let team members know of the escape. He was assaulted until he was not able to resist and they took him to a secure room and locked him inside. This attack cause substantial bodily harm.

Given the nature of the events, CYC administration proceeded to modify placement for youth involved. The two youth involved in the October 2014 incident were transferred to Clark County Juvenile Detention Center on a courtesy hold until placement could be secured. One was transferred to then-operating Red Rock Academy and the other to a placement in Texas. For the January 2016 incident, three of the nine youth were transferred to other facilities. Two of them transferred to NYTC and one to placement in Texas. CYC administrators provided their middle management team with briefings on the incidents and what staff can do to better prepare themselves and not become complacent in their duties.

1. CYC administrators and supervisors provided staff with appropriate guidance and training. This direction was given in middle management meetings.

2. For youth involved in 2016 incident, the six remaining at CYC were split up among the four male cottages and were on run risk protocol for a length of time.

Task Force Recommendations

Reform Admissions Process to Use Evidence Based Elopement Risk Assessment and to Not Place Highest Risk Youth at Nevada Youth Training Center

Being able to appropriately assess youth for Nevada's staff secure facilities or our secure facility Summit View Youth Center (SVYC) is something that needs improvement. While not all youth with a highest risk rating to runaway do so, many that do attempt escape have this rating. Finding the balance of which youth should be placed in a staff secure setting is difficult and a risky situation. One principle of effective intervention for troubled youth is the least amount of intervention necessary; it is often the case that a youth qualifying for a secure setting are first tried in a staff secure setting. While this principle prioritizes the rehabilitation of the youth, it does not necessarily prioritize the safety of youth, staff, or community when placed at a staff secure location close to a community. The escape risk identified with each youth that escaped is as follows:

	Highest	High	Moderate	Low	None
NYTC	3	0	2	0	0
CYC	3	3	3	0	2

1. Fourteen of the sixteen youth involved in the escapes reviewed had a risk rating of Moderate, High, or Highest in the Prior Runaways or Escapes category.

2. Only two of the sixteen had no history.

3. Six of the sixteen qualified as Highest in this risk category.

Many of the youth with high risk ratings do very well with the programming and rehabilitation at NYTC and CYC. The chance we take on these high risk youth has benefitted many of them and the State of Nevada. For those youth with highest run risk, the safety risk to the youth and the community surrounding the facility should outweigh the programming benefits at the staff secure facilities and the youth should not be admitted to NYTC given its proximity to a large community and access to transportation. Finally, the agency should ensure that an evidence based tool is used to assess elopement risk.

Enhanced and Continuous Training to Ensure Staff Consistently Follow Policies and Procedures

In discussing these instances, the task force agreed that NYTC and CYC are often working with the highest level of offenders in the juvenile system at staff secure facilities. These youth are not only unpredictable but manipulative and in tune with what staff are doing at all times. They look for weaknesses or times when a procedure or policy is not being followed and they capitalize on this. Considering escape attempts, after careful planning, they will watch for their opportunity and take it when it occurs. Staff must always be cognizant of this. The ongoing efforts to standardize policies and procedures across Nevada Juvenile Justice Facilities should include a review of escape risk policies and procedures. The review should include mandating training focused on escape risks and prevention.

Implement Facility Wide Debriefings at CYC Similar to NYTC

CYC can improve on debriefing these incidents in the same manner as NYTC. This will provide better communication and better training for the facility, not just the parties involved or those attending meetings. These facility wide emails provide appropriate transparency and information that everyone can learn from.

Escape Taskforce Members

Chairman Tyler Petersen, Caliente Youth Center

Richard Malone, Summit View Youth Center

Brian Shultz, Summit View Youth Center

Tom Smith, Nevada Youth Training Center

Marshal Stackhouse, Caliente Youth Center

Greg Thornton, Nevada Youth Training Center