

# Juvenile center chided on reforms

## Staffing problems continue at troubled facility, report says

By Ofelia Casillas  
Tribune staff reporter

Despite encouraging changes in leadership, reform has not trickled down to frontline workers at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, according to a new report by a prisoner advocacy group.

During a late August visit, observers from the John Howard Association of Illinois found that the controversial center suffers from a shortage of counselors—especially of good counselors, the group concluded in a report for release Wednesday.

“Safety for children will remain an issue until the culture, standard of care and lack of professionalism that prevailed among some staff for a number of years is completely eliminated,” the report warns.

J.W. Fairman, the center’s interim superintendent since Aug. 1, acknowledged that problems continue, but he said change takes time.

“It takes time to get everybody on the same page when you are taking over the operation of a troubled institution,” Fairman said. “As long as progress is being made, I’m happy about it. Is the administration satisfied? No, but we are happy that there is movement.”

Last year, the Tribune and other news media reported that

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former residents alleged they had been involved in violence at the center, some at the hands of staff members.

In September, a federal grand jury issued subpoenas demanding photographs, internal reports and other documents in a growing criminal investigation into alleged violence and abuse.

Benjamin Wolf, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, said it was important to remember that new leaders were only recently assigned to their positions.

“It is a difficult change process, and I don’t think we’ve done it yet,” Wolf said. “But I think it is true that we remain concerned about the safety of the children and about the behavior of some staff.”

John Howard advocates applauded improvements like the addition of two-way radios on living units, a crackdown on contraband and plans to better acclimate new residents when they arrive.

Still, advocates said staffing levels fell short of optimal among floor managers, supervisors, detention counselors and caseworkers. And the quality of some detention counselors continued to worry advocates, who called for disciplining or discharging counselors who mishandle residents.

On a more mundane level, the observers noted that some counselors interact little with the teenagers in their care, spending their time eating or doing paperwork.

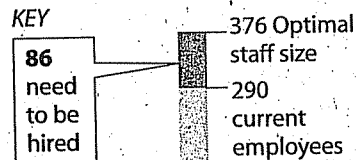
“Our visitors were, as in the past, concerned about the dedication, interest and suitability of some of the line staff,” the report said.

The John Howard observers reported five incidents during three weeks in which staff members were alleged to have injured children.

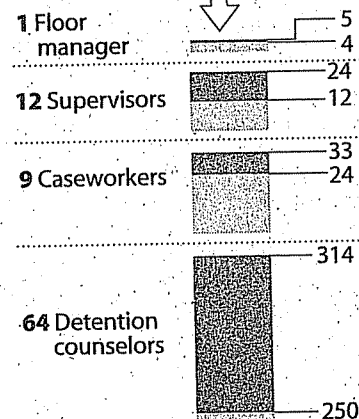
## ‘Minimal’ crew operating juvy detention center

The Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center needs to increase its staff by 23 percent “to provide something better than minimal and closer to optimal services for children,” according to a report by the John Howard Association.

### TOTAL SHORTAGES



### BREAKDOWN BY POSITION



Chicago Tribune