



February 16, 2016

The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III
Subcommittee Chairman, Legislative Oversight Committee
South Carolina House of Representatives
Post Office Box 11867
Columbia, South Carolina 29211

Dear Representative Finlay:

Thank you for taking time to meet with our constituents and to receive testimony from them at a public hearing last week. At the conclusion of this public hearing, it was brought to my attention by you and Representative Newton that there was some question/concern about the criteria we used in responding to the following inquiry/request for information included in your letter of December 21, 2015:

“Additionally, please provide a briefing to the subcommittee about the events that occurred the weekend of December 18-20 which required juveniles in the agency’s crisis management unit to be displaced to another facility and any other similar events that have occurred over the past three years.”

We interpreted your question to be specific to the type of incident (fire rendering living unit temporarily uninhabitable and causing youth to be relocated to another facility) that occurred on the night of December 19, 2015. As previously explained, there were three fires intentionally set by youth in two living units/pods by seven youth at the Department’s long-term facility known as the Broad River Road Campus (BRRC). These fires resulted in minor damage to the unit/pod and required medical evaluation of youth (and impacted staff) in those affected living units for smoke inhalation and then subsequent relocation from these units. Due to the number of youth impacted and being mindful of classification criteria, we were unable to relocate all youth in other dorms/pods at BRRC. This resulted in youth from both units being relocated temporarily off the campus of BRRC to the nearest available DJJ facilities which are the Juvenile Detention Center and Midlands Evaluation Center, both located on Shivers Road in Columbia, South Carolina. The impacted dorm was repaired within one week, and the repairs in the Crisis Management Unit remain ongoing (as we are taking advantage of the building being vacant to make additional security modifications and upgrades).

In looking back three years as requested, the criteria we used in responding to your inquiry were as follows:

- Were there any other fires in the past three years that caused damage to a facility?
-No, there were not.
- Were youth treated for smoke inhalation in any other incident in the past three years?
-No, they were not.
- Was the fire department called to respond to a fire in multiple units on the same night in the past three years?
-No, they were not.
- Did any other fires cause youth to be displaced to other living units?
-No, they did not.

We did not consider then, nor do we consider now, that we had any “similar” or like events that have occurred over the past three years. In short, there has been no other incident, similar or otherwise, that has caused youth from the long-term facility to be displaced from their living unit at BRRC to another DJJ facility (in this case, the Juvenile Detention Center and Midlands Evaluation Center). In summary, the incident of December 19, 2015, was very serious and unique in its complexity and in its scope in comparison to other incidents that occur at DJJ, and therefore, is not comparable to any other incident that has occurred in any DJJ facility over the last three years.

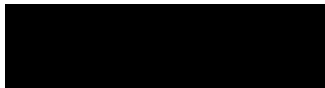
That being said, we certainly have had other serious events involving DJJ youth that have occurred over the past three years, though significantly different in nature from that of December 19, 2015. These events include a male youth who was assaulted by a JCO (resulting in a broken leg) at the Midlands Evaluation Center in July 2013, a female youth who was assaulted by a JCO with a fork (resulting in scratches and puncture wounds) in December 2013, a youth who escaped from BRRC through an un-secured drainage pipe in February 2014, a youth who escaped from BRRC and was re-captured after approximately 1.5 hours in June 2014, a youth being held on adult charges who committed suicide at the Juvenile Detention Center in July 2014, a youth who caused significant property destruction (used a baseball bat to break multiple glass windows/doors, computers, etc.) at Poplar Dorm at BRRC in August 2015, multiple youth who engaged in a gang-related fight/disturbance at Birchwood High School in September 2015, and multiple youth who engaged in significant property destruction at Magnolia Dorm at BRRC in September 2015. We would be happy to provide the Subcommittee with further information regarding any of these incidents, and our response thereto, should you so request.

The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III
February 16, 2016
Page Three

In addition, we are currently working with the staff of the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Subcommittee to identify and provide you with the information that you are seeking in reference to incidents that have occurred at any DJJ facility or contracted residential program in the past three years of which your committee or any of its members may have an interest. This information will be forthcoming in as timely a manner as we are able to assemble it.

Thank you again to each of you and to the Legislative Oversight Committee staff for your time and attention. Please let me know if I or my staff can provide you with additional information or answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of Sylvia Murray.

Sylvia Murray
Director

SM/kp

cc: The Hon. William Weston J. Newton
The Hon. Raye Felder
The Hon. William K. Bowers
The Hon. Edward R. Tallon, Sr.
Ms. Jennifer L. Dobson
Mr. Charles L. Appleby IV