

OVERVIEW

Management Audit of the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility

Report No. 06-03, May 2006

Summary

The Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility has been the focus of intense scrutiny over the past several years. Recently, reports and lawsuits by the American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i and the U.S. Department of Justice have highlighted problems at the facility. The State has entered into a memorandum of agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ) for correction of those problems. Failure to make those improvements will risk reinstatement of the federal lawsuit.

In addition, the Legislature conducted hearings on the situation at the facility, leading to a request for our audit. We conducted this audit in response to Act 1, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2006, to assess whether the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility is organized and managed to carry out its mission. We also procured the services of a certified public accounting firm to conduct the financial portion of the audit to assess selected fiscal issues, including, but not limited to, a review of sick leave, overtime, and procurement issues. The financial portion of the audit will be released separately.

We found that the Office of Youth Services, which is responsible for overseeing the facility, has not provided the facility with adequate guidance and support to carry out its mission. For example, the office has not clearly communicated whether the facility's mission is primarily rehabilitation or secure incarceration. This ambiguity has caused considerable confusion among facility staff. Statutory direction has also offered minimal guidance to both the office and the facility. Failing to follow its strategic plan, such as developing more aggressive alternatives to incarceration and strengthening its after-care and transition programs, the Office of Youth Services continues to engage in reactive rather than proactive management. The office also relies on consultant services to improve the conditions at the facility without first utilizing in-state expertise.

We also found that the facility needs to use productive management tools. Positions critical to the improvement of the facility are vacant or temporarily filled, creating management inconsistencies and uncertainty among staff. For example, various facility staff have been temporarily and intermittently assigned to the Corrections Supervisor I position since August 2003. The position, which oversees all social workers and youth corrections supervisors and officers, is instrumental to providing services to the facility's youth and security for the facility. Likewise, job performance evaluations are not conducted systematically or used as an effective management tool — we found that less than 17 percent of facility staff received annual performance appraisals for 2004 and 2005. Further, regularly conducted staff training and a quality assurance program have only recently been implemented as part of the agreement with the federal justice department. The agreement includes four substantive remedial measures; protection



from harm, training, access to medical and mental health care, and special education. The agreement also requires the facility to revise and/or develop its policies and procedures.

Recommendations and Response

We recommended the Legislature consider revising relevant sections of Chapters 352 and 352D, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, to clarify the purpose of the Office of Youth Services and the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility. For the office, we recommended it clarify its and the facility's overall missions, clearly state the goals and establish measures of success for each component of its continuum of services, scrutinize the need for consultant services, and ensure that training provided by and plans created with consultants are implemented, monitored, and enforced at the program level. For the Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility, we recommended that it maintain and systematically ensure that critical positions are filled with permanent staff, that job performance evaluations are conducted annually, and that initial and follow-up training sessions are provided for staff. We further recommended that the facility maintain a quality assurance program, measure program effectiveness, and develop a management information system.

The Office of Youth Services generally agreed with our findings and recommendations and expressed appreciation for the report's fairness in recognizing the organization historically. However, the office disagrees with our finding that consultants have overlapping duties. For example, the office does not consider the technical advisor from the Federal Bureau of Prisons to be a consultant since this person was obtained via an interagency personnel employment exchange. However, regardless of the position title, the agreement requires the office to pay for the services being provided. Further, both the technical advisor and the memorandum of agreement monitor assess the facility's progress in achieving the required improvements—an apparent overlap of duties. In addition, while the office claims to have implemented some of the concepts from the 2000 update to the strategic plan, its officials concede that they have not fully implemented the plan. We maintain that had the office implemented its 2000 update to its strategic plan, improvements at the facility might have precluded the need for a DOJ agreement.

The Office of Youth Services provided additional information to explain its current procedures and corrective actions planned. Some points of clarification were included in the final report.

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