



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
LANSING

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**DATE:** August 9, 2005

**TO:** Senator Alan Cropsey  
Representative William Van Regenmorter  
Representative Jack Brandenburg  
Carol Viventi, Secretary of the Senate  
Gary Randall, Clerk of the House of Representatives

**FROM:** Heidi Washington  
Administrative Assistant

**SUBJECT:** Annual Report on the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility

Michigan Compiled Law 791.220g requires the Department of Corrections to report to the Senate and House committees responsible for legislation concerning corrections and to the Clerk of the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the Senate, on the operation of the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility. Attached is a copy of that report as required by statute.

If you have questions regarding this report, or request additional information, please feel free to contact me.

**Report to the Legislature  
Michigan Youth Correctional Facility  
July 2005**

Pursuant to Section 20g of 1953 Public Act 232, as amended, being MCL 791.220g, the State of Michigan received the authority to contract with the private sector for operation of a 480-bed correctional facility for offenders age 19 and under who were within the jurisdiction of the Circuit or Recorder's Court. This Act was amended to include offenders age 19 and under who were within the jurisdiction of the Probate or Family Court. The Act was amended again in June 2000 to permit, with some restrictions, the Department of Corrections to place any prisoner age 19 and under at this facility.

The Act also permitted this facility to be built and operated by a private corporation. In June 1997, Wackenhut Corrections Corporation was awarded the bid to build and operate this facility. Construction of the facility was completed in June 1999 and the facility opened on July 27, 1999. In January 2004, the corporation changed its name to The GEO Group, Inc.

The purpose of the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility (MYC) is to house prisoners in the above noted age group in a secure facility while at the same time providing educational training to assist prisoners in obtaining their General Education Development (GED) certificate, counseling programs, leisure time activities, and prison job opportunities that will prepare the prisoners for entry into an adult male correctional facility. Before prisoners turn 20, they are transferred to a department operated prison to serve the balance of their sentence(s).

Section 20g of 1953 Public Act 232, as amended, being MCL 791.220g, (10) requires:

*Once each year, the department shall report on the operation of the facility. Copies of the report shall be submitted to the chairpersons of the house and senate committees responsible for legislation on corrections or judicial issues, and to the clerk of the house of representatives and the secretary of the senate.*

This report on the operation of the facility is designed to fulfill the obligation of the department under the statute. The report contains information obtained through separate audits regarding quality of programs offered, health care adherence to National Commission on Correctional Health Care/American Correctional Association (ACA) standards and the readiness of the facility to be accredited by ACA.

## **DEPARTMENT OVERSIGHT**

Department of Corrections (DOC) oversight of this privatized facility is provided by an on-site contract monitor and a contract administrator who operates out of the Administration and Programs Administration of the DOC. Suzanne Carr temporarily assumed the position of Contract Monitor on March 21, 2005. She came to MYC from the Pugsley Correctional Facility in Kingsley, Michigan, where she served as Assistant Deputy Warden for Custody, Security, Housing and Programs. Ms. Carr's experience in the DOC began in 1979. The contract monitor's work location is at the MYC. The monitor's daily contact with prisoners, staff and the warden of the facility enable her to review the operation of the facility to ensure compliance with the contract.

The contract administrator interacts with corporate staff from The GEO Group, Inc. to resolve contract

compliance issues and may assess liquidated damages for breach of contract. Along with the Deputy Director for the Office of Purchasing, Department of Management and Budget, the Contract Administrator negotiates with The GEO Group, Inc. any additional issues which arise from changes in departmental policy, court action which involves Michigan prisoners or problems within their corporation which impact on the contractor's ability to operate the facility.

## **ADMINISTRATION OF THE FACILITY**

The administrative staff at MYC has experienced some changes over the past year. Frank Elo continues as warden of the facility as does Allen Haigh as Deputy Warden. Bob Steifer, Deputy Warden of security, transferred to MYC from another GEO facility after Aaron Wemple retired.

The facility was audited by ACA for reaccreditation in July 2004 and received a score of 99.8. The facility was missing only one non-mandatory standard.

The facility is in compliance with staffing requirements of the contract. However, they continue to be challenged to keep all positions filled.

The contract monitor attends meetings between corporate management and facility managers regarding facility operations, financial requirements and quality assurance.

The GEO Group, Inc. has remained solely and entirely responsible for the acts of its employees, servants and subcontractors. The contractor has not hired any individual who would otherwise be precluded from state employment with the Michigan Department of Corrections and has trained all of their employees using the State training modules. The management of the facility has acted responsibly to discipline or separate employees whose actions violated rules. Investigations are sometimes slow to resolve at MYC because they are first reviewed and directives are issued through corporate office.

## **RECORDS MANAGEMENT & REIMBURSEMENT**

The contractor is required to retain prisoner files in both paper form and through the computerized system. The appropriate paperwork is present in prisoner files and information on prisoners who have transferred out of the facility has been up to date.

The contractor is required to obtain victim restitution and court ordered payments from the prisoners at the MYC and to remit these payments to the Department. The facility has complied with this requirement. It should be noted that the facility has also complied with health care prisoner co-payments.

## **SECURITY AND CONTROL**

In the past year, the contractor has filled all positions under the staffing plan; however separations require continual hiring and training.

Two security towers and a perimeter security vehicle along with required double fencing, alarm systems and a multitude of video cameras permit the staff at the MYC to monitor both prisoner and employee behavior.

From July 1, 2004, until June 30, 2005, there were 374 incidents at the MYC which by department policy are required to be reported as critical incidents. Of those critical reports, 43 involved assaults on staff, 57 were assaults on prisoners, 24 were prisoner fights, 24 were offender controls, 1 was for prisoner weapon use, 8 were physical plant issues, 104 were suicide attempts, and the remaining 113 involved other classified incidents with no injuries or damages. This is an increase from the previous 12-month period which recorded 155 critical incidents, 39 which were assaults. MYC has taken steps to modify cell doors in detention/segregation which should serve to eliminate some critical incidents regarding food tray slots. In addition, the Department will now reserve some openings for MYC managers to attend MDOC Leadership Training.

In the past year, 2,437 misconducts were written in which DOC Hearing Officers made the following determinations: 1,870 guilty findings, 152 not guilty findings, and 415 dismissals. This year's misconduct statistics show a reduction in the number of tickets written and a decrease in the number of not guilty findings; however, there was an increase in the number of dismissed misconducts. Misconducts are significantly higher at MYC as compared to other DOC facilities with similar prisoner make-up.

In addition, since July 1, 2004, 1,248 grievances were filed utilizing the facility's grievance procedure. It is notable that 11 grievances have been filed to Step III, up from 6 reported in the previous 12 months.

The contractor continues to monitor and reduce contraband in the facility by performing personal and cell searches. Random drug testing of prisoners has resulted in zero positive findings of drug use. The contractor has conformed to the DOC property policy, has issued sufficient clothing to prisoners to remain in compliance with requisite court orders and has maintained a laundry schedule so that prisoners have sufficient clean clothing.

## **FOOD SERVICE**

The contractor provides three meals a day per prisoner to assure this population is receiving 3,500 calories per day. Ten prisoners are currently on special medical diets as directed by health care staff. Custody supervision is present in the two dining rooms where prisoners are fed in small groups to avoid mingling of prisoners from different housing units and to prevent physical altercations between prisoners.

DOC central office staff worked closely with corporate staff to develop new menus that conform to DOC nutritional standards.

The contractor is in compliance with its obligation under the National School Lunch Program.

Prisoners who work in the kitchen are not permitted to utilize knives. There were no employee accidents in the kitchen and 63 prisoner accidents. All of the accidents were minor and did not require more than on-site medical care. While the numbers of minor accidents has increased, the reporting and documentation has also improved accounting for the elevated numbers.

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

The contractor has implemented all contractual requirements regarding health care services.

Provision of services for mentally ill prisoners is a requirement of the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH). MDCH has provided these services by subcontracting with Northern Clinical and Diagnostic Associates, LLC.

## **COUNSELING AND PROGRAMMING**

Both Master Social Worker positions are filled. Segregation rounds are being made and the anger management and sex-offender therapy groups are in process.

Twenty-four prisoners finished “New Steps,” the cognitive restructuring program. The class is monitored by a case manager.

There are four case managers and a supervisor who review prisoner files with the prisoners and prepare the necessary reports and classification documents for prisoner files.

## **EDUCATION**

There are five academic teachers, one life skills instructor, two vocational instructors and one contracted parenting instructor at the prison as well as an education director. One teacher continues to pursue further education at the expense of the contractor to obtain a special education certificate. Meanwhile, the Michigan Department of Education has granted temporary licensing so that this teacher can provide special education to prisoners who qualify. In the past year, 183 GED certificates have been awarded. One hundred eighty eight (188) prisoners completed the substance abuse program, and 104 prisoners completed vocational programming. There are 183 full-time academic students, 43 vocational students, 13 involved in life skills, 53 in substance abuse education and 51 taking in-cell studies (administrative segregation and detention prisoners). Half-time academic student positions have been eliminated.

The facility has a library staffed with a librarian. In addition, the academic teachers schedule their entire classes into the library several times a week so that prisoners can further utilize the library. The library also includes a full law library and the contractor provides updates for the law library on CD-ROM.

The contractor is providing three vocational education programs. The janitorial maintenance program is a 120-hour program with 22 students enrolled. The computer literacy program is also a 120-hour program with 6 students enrolled. Although the horticulture program, Master Gardener, was developed by Michigan State University, the facility is having difficulty in attracting interested prisoners, so it currently involves only 3 students. Each of these vocational programs meets for 2-hour increments, 4-5 days per week.

Classes are also held in the segregation unit and in the “16 years old and under” unit. Prisoners in those units are able to attend classes in an environment away from the general population of the facility.

## **WORK PROGRAMS**

There are 229 prisoners at MYC who have been given full-time work assignments, up from 202 last year.

Prisoner work assignments follow the same descriptions as those jobs in the DOC and prisoners are paid the same amounts as they would be if they were performing the same job in a state-run facility. At this time, prisoners are assigned as porters, food service workers, library clerks, laundry workers, commissary workers and grounds maintenance workers. No prisoners are assigned to a work assignment outside the security perimeter. The contractor is required to follow MIOSHA standards for health and safety.

## **RECREATION**

Prisoners in general population are permitted two hours of recreation per day. These recreational periods are in the outside yard, weather permitting. The contractor has a recreational director who plans activities appropriate to this age group. Recreation in segregation conforms to the requirements set in departmental policy and ACA standards.

## **COMMISSARY**

The contractor provides access to a commissary where prisoners can purchase hygiene and food items. This age group is prone to purchasing candy, soda and other sweet items. By contract, profits from the commissary are placed in a prisoner benefit fund. The prisoner benefit fund is audited annually.

## **RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES AND VOLUNTEERS**

The contractor employs a full-time chaplain who ministers to prisoners, provides religious services and supervises the volunteers. Volunteers provide religious programs, AA and NA.

On July 31, 2003, a dog therapy program through volunteers of Pawfect Companions Canine Group was instituted. Volunteers bring in trained therapy dogs to interact with prisoners experiencing behavioral problems or short-term bereavement/stress issues. Volunteers visit once a week for one hour with as many as five dogs for one-on-one therapy with prisoners. Currently there are 6 prisoners actively rotating visits. There are 22 prisoners on a waiting list. A prisoner may be placed on the list by his own volition, through staff recommendation, or by an Outpatient Mental Health Team recommendation. This program is monitored by one of the Master Social Workers and Case Manager.

## **HOUSEKEEPING, GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS**

The contractor is required to assume responsibility for paying the cost of and repairing all damage to the structure and fixed furnishings and equipment which is caused by prisoners, visitors, the contractor and its employees or subcontractors. In addition, the contractor is required to develop and implement facility sanitation, cleaning and maintenance procedures.

Weekly fire inspections are completed, trash is removed timely and pest control is completed on a regular basis.

## **CHALLENGES IN THE PAST YEAR**

The pending deliberation in the legislature with regard to the proposed cancellation of the contract with The GEO Group, Inc. has been an area of concern for the facility and the surrounding community.

It is no secret that the State is facing a serious budget crisis. These are tough times and we have had to make difficult choices about how to reduce costs and help to eliminate the State's budget deficit. Several nonpartisan agencies including the Auditor General concluded that there would be a cost savings to the State if the Department canceled its contract to house prisoners at MYC and once again housed its own prisoners. The Department is prepared to bring the 480 prisoners being housed at the youth facility into the State system and save millions of tax dollars. Maintaining the contract for the operation of MYC is not a benefit to taxpayers. The Department does not oppose the continued operation of a facility by The GEO Group, Inc.. We simply cannot justify continuing to house Michigan prisoners at the facility when there is proven cost savings to the tax payers of Michigan to bring these prisoners back into available DOC prison beds.

In previous years, the contractor's greatest challenge was in hiring, training and retaining sufficient staff required under the staffing plan. The facility continues to have difficulty in hiring a diverse work force and existing staff are required to work overtime.

Warden Elo has continued to work on the problem of staff retention taking action to separate poor and ineffective staff, and rewriting policy and procedures to provide better direction for staff.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The department continually audits the facility to ensure compliance with all aspects of security, property management, programming, health care and financial requirements are maintained, as well as ACA accreditation readiness.