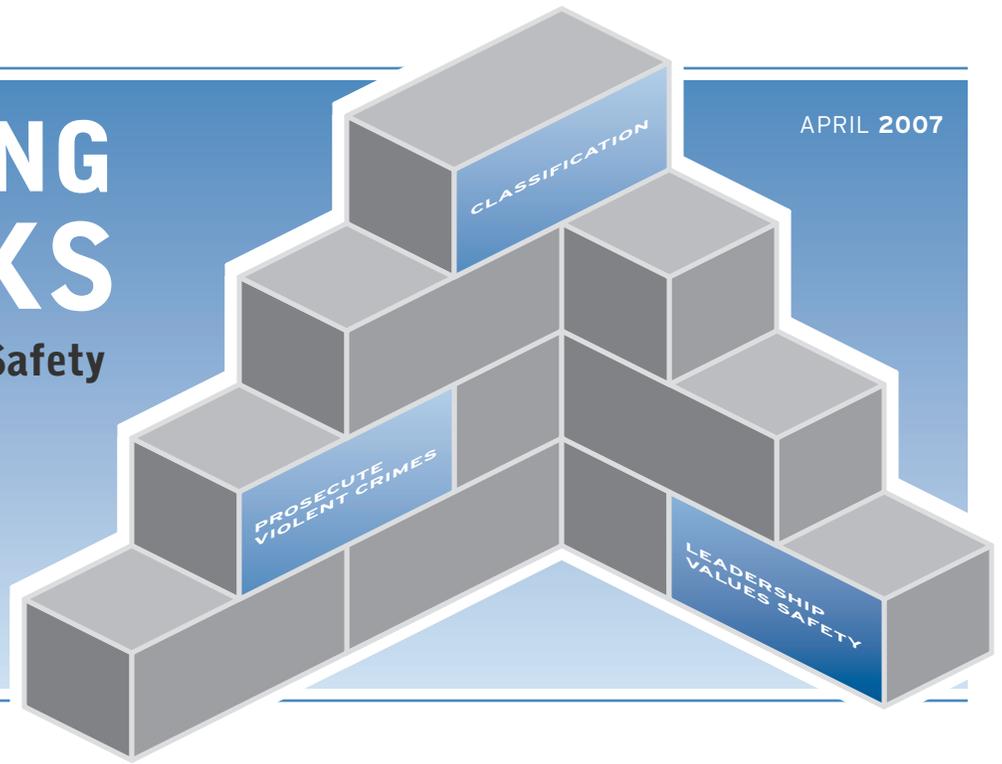


# BUILDING BLOCKS

for Institutional Safety

APRIL 2007



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ISSUE TWO IN A SERIES

## ► Promising Practices to Prevent Resident Sexual Assaults at Woodfield Cottage Secure Detention Facility

*This newsletter is the second in a series on promising practices to prevent and respond to resident-on-resident sexual assault in the nation's jails and juvenile correctional facilities. For an overview of the topic, see Newsletter #1, "Responding to the Prison Rape Elimination Act," available at <http://dcj.state.co.us/ors>. The newsletters are provided under grant # 2004 RP BX 0095 from the National Institute of Justice to the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice. Forthcoming newsletters will profile promising practices in other jails and juvenile facilities.*

*The newsletters reflect findings from our study of promising practices. We encourage facility administrators elsewhere in the nation to replicate these extraordinary efforts to prevent inmate sexual assaults.*

*If you would like to be placed on the mailing list to receive upcoming newsletters in this series, please contact Pat Lounders at the Colorado Division of Criminal Justice, [Pat.Lounders@cdps.state.co.us](mailto:Pat.Lounders@cdps.state.co.us).*

### Woodfield Cottage Secure Detention Facility Valhalla, New York

*Safety measures are implemented at Woodfield within an overarching child care philosophy: Every child should return to the community with an increased ability to succeed.*

Woodfield Secure Detention, a coed facility owned by Westchester County, has the capacity to house between 24 to 30 youthful offenders. Typical residents are between the ages of 10 through 15 and stay in the facility for an average of 60 days. The facility can also house those ages 16 to 18 years old, if they have committed a crime prior to age 16 and violated parole. The police department, office of family services, probation office, or an interstate compact can bring juveniles to the facility; however, the juvenile must be charged with or alleged to have committed a crime in order to be admitted.

Westchester County contracts with the private company Leake and Watts Services, Inc. to staff and manage





Woodfield. Leake and Watts Services, Inc. was founded in 1821 by a wealthy landowner who left his fortune to start a home for orphaned children. Leake and Watts is a not-for-profit organization that provides a continuum of residential, therapeutic, clinical, educational, and supportive community-based programs, including Head Start programs and foster care, to more than 3,000 children and families in the Bronx, Westchester County, and the Greater New York area. This history is important because Woodfield Detention Facility is directed and staffed by professionals with a—child-centered, social services philosophy rather than a corrections philosophy.

The facility is part of a complex of institutions that includes an adult prison, a hospital, and a children’s hospital. Private security agents patrol the entire area, which is in proximity to the local police department. In fact, Woodfield Facility communication radios are maintained on the same frequency as the police department’s radios, and officers provide backup at the facility when necessary. The private security agents also ensure that the Woodfield staff stays informed of any incidents taking place in the larger complex.

The facility’s administrators are accountable to multiple agencies and requirements. Since the facility is county-owned, county inspectors have keys to the facility and undertake unannounced audits. The facility is also licensed by the State of New York and must comply with all state requirements. In addition, Leake and Watts’ central administration provides oversight.

## Program philosophy

### Providing care for residents is the overriding philosophy

Although Leake and Watts Services, Inc. has been providing child care for over 175 years, Woodfield is the company’s first attempt at running a detention facility. Company officials debated about whether to write a proposal to the county when the first request for bids was released in the mid-1990s. They questioned whether a

*Elements of holistic care of the child involve the environment and other services such as social work. “You need to be firm but not yell at the kids. Staff who yell can be less effective with kids.”*

– Pediatrician Peter Masella

detention facility fit with the company’s mission of helping struggling children and families. Eventually, the management group decided that caring for children included caring for those housed in detention facilities. As a result, Leake and Watts Services, Inc. submitted a proposal and was awarded the contract from Westchester County to manage Woodfield Detention Facility in 1995.

*“They made a mistake in life, but they are going to be our future. If we do not make a way for them, what is our future?”*

– Assistant Director Michael Poindexter

The company sought to integrate a child care philosophy into detention services. Officials believed that youth should be treated as children even when they made a mistake that resulted in their being placed in law enforcement custody. In keeping with this belief, professionals refer to the residents as children or residents, not delinquents.

Leake and Watts’ child care philosophy underscores their efforts to operate an effective facility that is safe for residents. Administrators believe that everyone has more dignity and feels more positive in a safe and clean environment. Furthermore, the experience of administrative staff is that residents are on edge and become defensive when they feel unsafe. Fights are more likely to happen under these conditions.

## Adherence to policy promotes safety

### Adherence to policy is a core value

The safety and integrity of the program are maintained by making it a priority for staff to be familiar with the agency’s written policies and procedures. To that end, the program director makes an effort to establish and integrate written policies and procedures into day-to-day operations. Staff are periodically tested on the written policies and procedures and must score at least 85% on the test or must repeat the test. If an employee continues to fail the test after three attempts, consequences are invoked by the program director.

Besides testing staff to verify their knowledge of the policies, supervisors and administrative staff are on the floor most of the day to ensure that these policies are fairly and consistently applied in practice. In addition to these mea-



tures, the program director periodically enters the facility at undetermined times (e.g., 3:00 a.m.) to see if everything is happening the way it should be on all shifts. He is able to enter the facility unannounced through a back door.

Guidelines of the American Correctional Association and the New York State's Office of Children and Family Services, as well as state and county requirements, were used to formulate policies. The value of establishing written policies extends to all areas of the detention center. For example, the nurse supervisor recently developed a policy and procedures manual that addresses medical care.

When a staff member makes a disciplinary decision that is inconsistent with policy, the supervisor tries to resolve the issue without undermining the staff member's authority. The supervisor talks to the staff person about the problem, and they will work out a plan together before they both talk to the resident. The supervisor and staff member then counsel the youth together, which reinforces the authority of the staff member. For example, during this joint session, the staff member may inform the youth that he was originally planning on giving him the first sanction but has decided to impose a different sanction. This maintains continuity of policy along with the staff member's authority.

***Written policies are critical. "A lack of compliance with policy could result in liability for the institution. Safety measures will also break down if staff do not follow the policies and institute the measures."***

– Program Director George Walters

## **“No touch” policy tempered by a caring attitude**

One of the reasons Woodfield Detention Facility was of interest to project researchers is its controversial “no touch” policy. Researchers became aware of the policy during a telephone interview with the program director. George Walters emphasized a consistent focus on the safety and well being of the residents, which was a motivating factor in the facility's no touch policy. An ongoing debate in youth residential care focuses on staff boundaries and physical contact between staff and residents. On the one hand, some professionals worry that physical contact will provide opportunities for abuse, while others feel that youthful offenders are at vulnerable developmental ages when human touch is a critical component of emotional health.

In part, the decision to limit touching was made out of a growing realization that many of the children had been physically and sexually abused and many displayed anxiety when touched by staff. Administrators emphasize verbal communication and counseling as primary tools for interacting with youth. As Pediatrician Peter Masella noted, “You can make contact with kids through eye contact, not only physical contact.”

Residents are expected to maintain a specific posture and distance from staff, and they are required to walk in single file with their hands behind their back. This distance permits staff to easily observe the behaviors and interactions of residents. If a resident does not walk in formation or, for example, kicks a door in frustration, staff will send the youth to his or her room. If the youth refuses, staff will send those who observed the incident to their rooms and counsel the frustrated child until he agrees to go to his room.

Not all physical contact is restricted. Staff might occasionally put an arm around a child who becomes overwhelmed with emotion, and some staff give residents “high fives” for an accomplishment such as making a basket during recreation in the gym. Based on their different professional roles, medical staff and social workers are less restricted in their physical contact with the residents.

## **Use of physical restraint is considered a last resort**

Counseling is the primary intervention employed to control problematic behavior, and staff focus on preventing incidents rather than intervening afterward. This approach appears to be effective. No physical altercations between residents had occurred during the three-month period prior to our visit to the facility.

Every time a disciplinary action is taken with a child, the staff must complete an incident report. Information about time-outs, room restrictions, and restraints is collected and tabulated every month for submission to the county and the state. Before these protocols were implemented, facility staff used physical restraints approximately 300 times and mechanical restraints about 85 times each year. In 2004, out of 345 intakes to the facility, physical restraints were only used 20 times and mechanical restraints 12 times.

When restraints are necessary, the administration employs the Bruce Chapman *Handle with Care* techniques ([www.handlewithcare.com](http://www.handlewithcare.com)), an approach that is endorsed by the Child Welfare League of America. Handle with Care



methods, developed by Chapman when he worked at an in-patient psychiatric hospital in Pennsylvania in the mid-1970s, promise to help trained professionals turn turmoil and confusion into decisive therapeutic intervention by using passive restraint that does not inflict pain or injury. Woodfield staff have been trained at Chapman’s Instructor Certification Program, and the certified instructors train additional facility staff. Both instructors and staff must be re-certified annually by receiving another 16 hours of training.

Mechanical restraints may be used in an emergency, but only with the program director’s approval. Even then, restraints can be used for no more than 20 minutes unless the program director issues a one-time re-approval for use

totaling no more than 40 minutes. Further use of mechanical restraints must be approved at the county level.

## **Structure provides safety and applies to residents and staff**

### **Intake and beyond**

The first contact a youth has with Woodfield involves a structured intake process. The child is searched for contraband and signs of abuse. When there are indicators of abuse, an outside physician examines the youth prior to his/her admission into the facility. If a child has suicidal ideation, he or she is sent to the psychiatric unit at the children’s hospital located nearby. Woodfield staff can follow up with suicide watch procedures if the youth remains at risk after returning; on-site psychiatric services are available three times per week.

**Handle With Care Behavior Management System, Inc.**  
**Brief statement of philosophy**

*Each intervention you make on behalf of a child must enhance and consolidate your relationship with that child and have a positive impact on the therapeutic community.* – Bruce Chapman

**Handle With Care Behavior Management System operates from the following assumptions:**

- *There is no dignity in allowing a child to hurt himself or someone else.*
- *He needs to be protected from the physical and emotional consequences of his behavior*
- *We need to be protected from the physical and emotional consequences of his behavior.*
- *In order to act in his best interests, we must be in control of our own feelings and behaviors.*
- *The out of control child is aware at some level that he is out of control and expects us to demonstrate the capacity to bring them under control safely.*
- *The safety of the child and the adult are equally important.*

Source: [www.handlewithcare.com](http://www.handlewithcare.com)  
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*“I have a lot of respect for the staff because I overhear line staff trying to help the kids resolve problems.”*

– Nurse Janet Parker

The youth are interviewed at intake to determine if they are affiliated with a gang; they are instructed that they are not allowed to wear clothing that signifies gang affiliation. They are also given a Resident Handbook that they must read or have read to them; afterward, they must sign a statement that they understand the facility rules and staff expectations. The handbook describes Woodfield’s behavior management level system, in which privileges are assigned when a resident meets basic expectations that are associated with specific levels. Additional privileges can be earned from positive participation in recreation and school over the course of a week.

A nurse assesses the youth and takes a medical history within 12 hours of admission. The resident is then tested for TB and sexually transmitted diseases. A physician completes a further health assessment within 72 hours.

*One component of sustaining a safe culture is adequate staffing. Currently, the program maintains a staff to resident ratio of 1 to 8.*



**The annual number of physical restraints fell by more than 90%, from 300 to 20, after these protocols were implemented.**

## **Methods used by Woodfield detention staff to prevent incidents of aggression**

- *Expectations of behavior are clearly presented in the Resident Handbook.*
- *Residents are offered anger management, life skills, and gang prevention classes.*
- *Staff are trained to provide crisis intervention and counseling to help residents get along with each other.*
- *Staff purposely address issues in a manner that does not embarrass the youth in front of their peers, decreasing the need to save face.*
- *Staff are trained to be inquisitive and find out what residents are talking about. While in the day room, for example, staff are encouraged to observe residents who are talking to each other and ask them about the conversation. This communication gives staff an opportunity to identify issues and problems before they escalate.*
- *Because the young people are often upset after they have a hearing on their case, when they return from court, they are assigned to their room for 30 minutes. This gives them an opportunity to be alone, talk with staff, or use other methods to manage their emotions before they rejoin facility activities and interact with the general population.*
- *Staff are trained to be sensitive to the dynamics among residents. If there appears to be tension, every attempt is made to pull one of the youth aside in a non-stigmatizing manner (e.g., staff will say, “I need to talk to you about your court case”) to determine the source of the tension and prevent a problem by counseling the youth.*
- *If staff hear residents talking in a manner that might provoke a fight, the youth are separated and given a time out. Staff talk to each young person individually and then together to help them learn how to solve problems.*
- *If a time-out does not seem to be enough, staff may send the instigator(s) to his or her room until staff can talk to him or her.*
- *Residents are allowed the opportunity to vent as long as they go back to their room when instructed.*
- *When a youth is disrespectful, he or she is disciplined through counseling.*
- *Room confinement is used when residents fight.*
- *If a youth refuses to go to his/her room, or when an incident occurs, the following steps are taken:*
  1. *A staff member talks with the youth and asks him or her to go to his or her room. If that does not work,*
  2. *A different staff member talks to the youth with the goal of moving the youth into his or her room. Residents are more likely to respond to a different staff member who was not present when the incident started.*
  3. *If multiple staff fail to talk the youth into the room, a supervisor is called in to talk to him or her.*
  4. *All the non-involved youth are sent to their rooms to “remove the audience.” This leaves the child alone with approximately 5 staff, and the youth will usually go to his room.*
- *The administration may use every staff person to intervene in incidents. Every effort is made to resolve the incident without use of physical restraints; however, a supervisor must be involved if physical restraint is used.*



## **Social workers play an important role**

Residents have daily contact with social workers during the first five days of confinement to facilitate their orientation to the facility program and behavior management system. The social worker often contacts the youth's parents to obtain a better understanding of his or her needs and to get their perspective on the child. The probation office or school is also contacted to discuss the child's placement. Social workers send progress reports to judges to inform them of the resident's progress in the behavior management system. Throughout the youth's placement at Woodfield, the social worker is available to assist the residents in resolving concerns and conflicts.

## **Rules promote structure and safety**

Programming is designed to teach order and discipline without being punitive. In fact, the word "punishment" is not used in the program. Some of the facility rules include:

- No two residents may be alone without direct staff supervision.
- Residents are assigned individual rooms. If the facility is overcrowded and a room must be double-bunked, the residents are housed in a dormitory and directly supervised at all times.
- Staff cannot step into a youth's room without another staff member present.
- Residents are escorted to the bathroom by staff to ensure that only one youth is in the bathroom at a time.
- Three youths can shower at a time with visual supervision by staff.
- Residents are not allowed to talk or have physical contact when moving between locations, and they must walk in formation with their hands behind their backs. This rule is designed to decrease their ability to swing their arms quickly and hit another resident without being observed. Three staff must accompany group movement: one in front, one in back, and one in the middle. The children count off at the beginning of movement and again when they arrive at the destination. All moves are logged.
- Residents are not allowed to have music that includes cursing.
- Staff open mail in front of residents and confiscate inappropriate material.
- When in the day room, residents must sit in chairs designated for them because certain chairs, designated as staff chairs, are positioned to provide the best view of the residents.

- Tape is on the floor about 3 feet outside of the control center doorway. Residents must stand outside the tape boundary when they talk to staff at the control center. This maintains boundaries and prevents residents from manipulating their way into the control center.
- Woodfield is a linear style facility, with two wings on each side of the control center and a day room in the middle. When residents are in their rooms, they must place their shoes outside the doors of their rooms, so control center staff know at a glance which residents are in their rooms.
- Security cameras monitor the wing hallways and record access to the rooms. If the recording indicates a staff member entered a youth's room alone and stepped out of the view of the camera, the administration will not support the employee in the event of allegations of misconduct.
- The youth are locked in their rooms at night. Residents can use an intercom to contact the control center when they need to use the restroom.
- The night shift staff consists of a supervisor and one male and one female staff member. If the male staff goes on the female unit, the female staff must accompany him. If the female goes into the male unit, the male staff must accompany her.
- During the night shift, staff check each room every 20 minutes. If the staff member only sees a lump under the covers and cannot see a body, the supervisor is called to enter the room with the staff person to verify the youth is in the bed. Video recordings from the security cameras are reviewed once or twice a week to see if the checks are being done every 20 minutes. Facility security checks are completed every hour during this shift.
- Night shift staff are assigned laundry duties to help them stay active and awake.
- Staff who participate in security checks, room confinement checks, suicide watches, or count times must record and sign off on the activity in a logbook or special form.

## **Rights and privacy are valued**

Policies also ensure that the residents have rights. A grievance system allows residents to lodge complaints when they do not feel they are being treated appropriately. Attempts are made to resolve the grievance at the lowest level, but the complaint goes up the chain of command until it is resolved. If the youth is not satisfied with the result, the facility's administrators will arrange for a county ombudsman to hear the child's grievance. Residents are



also given the 1-800-child abuse hotline in their handbook, and they are verbally informed about the hotline and encouraged to call if they feel they are being abused.

In general, staff are not informed of the youth's index crime, and the young people are discouraged from disclosing their crime. The goal is to decrease the stigma for the children and provide an environment in which all residents are treated equally. When the facility houses a child who has committed a sexual assault, the crime is not disclosed to all staff. An informed supervisor might arrange seating or showering times to decrease risk to other youth.

## Facility structure and safety measures

Woodfield has established many safety procedures including the following:

- The names of everyone entering the facility, including all staff, anyone associated with activities in the facility, and all group movements of residents, are recorded on a daily log record..
- The shift supervisor is responsible for knowing where everyone is at all times.
- Seven video cameras continuously record activity in the gym, housing hallways, and common areas. Tamper-proof domes cover the cameras on the wings, making it more difficult to sabotage this surveillance effort. The recording equipment is in a locked area that only the program director can access.
- Lights are turned on and off with a key, preventing youth from tampering with the lights.
- Alarms on all housing doors alert staff when any door is opened.
- An intercom system allows residents to communicate with the control center staff from their rooms.
- The control center electronically controls the locks in each room; doors automatically open during a fire or in the event of a power outage that results in generator backup.
- Each housing wing has a fenced area directly outside the exit door. This allows youth to be evacuated in an emergency situation without compromising security.
- Rooms are searched once a week at random times.
- Residents are scanned for metal when they go to or return from the gym or school, although these areas are located in the same physical structure.

- The recreation yard perimeter is searched before any child enters the area to make sure that contraband has not been thrown near or over the fence.
- Free weights are not allowed in the facility to prevent the use of weights as weapons.
- GPS is installed in the facility's transportation vans. The director can check on transport officers to determine the driving speed and location. Staff are prohibited from driving the van while using a cell phone or driving without their seat belts fastened.
- A comprehensive key control system was developed over a nine-month period; keys with limited facility access are assigned based on the staff member's job duties. Keys do not leave the facility and are locked up when not in use.
- Laundered items are counted.
- The kitchen is locked and inaccessible to residents; kitchen equipment and utensils are secured.
- Silverware, trays, and plates are counted before and after meals.
- Beds are bolted to the floor, and there is nothing in a room that can be used as a weapon.

### Signs that young people don't feel safe

*When Woodfield staff notice any of these indicators, they talk to the child or get the social worker involved to uncover the underlying issue. The staff at Woodfield are vigilant for the following indicators that young people feel unsafe:*

- *A child who is silent or withdrawn—this resident might be feeling threatened.*
- *Youth who act out beyond the level of the incident—this resident might be stressed and trying to look tough.*
- *A youth who is being ridiculed by all the other residents, even those who do not usually pick on others—this situation might indicate that someone is threatening that child.*
- *A child who wants to take himself out of programs that he usually participated in—this child might feel threatened.*
- *Any change of behavior, such as not wanting to shower with certain kids or groups—the youth may feel unsafe.*



## **Incidents are reported and assailants are prosecuted**

When security measures fail and an incident happens, law enforcement is contacted and an incident report is filed. On one occasion, a gang incident on the basketball court resulted in a youth being assaulted. Law enforcement was called, and all residents who participated in the assault were charged and eventually convicted.

*When cameras were first installed, staff had concerns that they were being watched. Administrators emphasized that recordings would provide protection against false allegations.*

If a youth makes an allegation and has bruises, the case is referred to Child Protective Services (CPS). If there are no bruises, the administration investigates, and the surveillance camera videotapes are reviewed. If the administrative investigation cannot confirm the allegation, CPS is contacted if a resident wants to report the incident to an outside agency. If an allegation is confirmed, the involved staff may receive a corrective action, suspension, or termination, depending on the seriousness of the behavior.

## **Programming is valued**

Woodfield has significant rules and security measures, but administrators want to positively influence every resident, even if a child stays only one day. Programming is an important method of implementing this philosophy. Programs teach young people new skills they can use in the community, whether it is taking care of basic needs like learning how to shower, learning basic etiquette, furthering their education, or learning how to write a resume.

*Every youth's facial silhouette and life goals are posted in the school hallway.*

Education is one of the primary programs offered. Most of the residents dropped out of school prior to admission, but all children at Woodfield must go to school. Woodfield's three teachers are state-certified in special education to ensure that services are tailored for each youth and that each has an opportunity to have a successful education experience at Woodfield.

Many students have learning and knowledge deficits, and class work is structured to minimize embarrassment in front of peers. For example, requiring a child to read out loud can lead to feelings of inadequacy in some children; in turn, a youth may act out to save face. Rather than asking students to read out loud, the teachers focus on helping residents to see the value in being able to read.

Programs give residents an opportunity to experience success. Residents are scored every day on their participation in school and recreation activities. Additional privileges are distributed every Friday night by the recreation supervisor, and residents with points for positive participation in school and gym for the week are allowed to stay up until midnight and participate in a pizza party. The party includes treats and a movie. The youth hear about the party from other residents and become motivated to do well so that they, too, can participate.

A negative score in school translates into lower behavior management points. When a resident receives a negative score, the teacher must notify the child and obtain his or her signature as proof that he or she was informed of the negative score.

## **Residents are exposed to a variety of pro-social activities**

Events are arranged to expose the residents to a variety of positive experiences, emphasizing that there can be more to life than what the child has experienced. Staff arrange periodic gospel festivals with local churches; music lessons with computer composing; art, dance, and drama lessons; and lectures from sports stars, rap group members, people who have overcome adversity, mayors, and judges. The staff also organize mock trials to help the youth understand the court and criminal justice system.

Residents are shown videos on individuals who were in detention and turned their lives around. In addition, the staff assemble talent shows, cultural awareness activities, and career days that expose the youth to different occupations and trades. Invited speakers are those who can positively influence or inspire the residents.

The young people are also taught coping and life skills. Class topics include violence prevention, sex education, developing positive relationships, and practical job-seeking skills, including writing a resume. The facility nurse provides sexual health education on an individual basis in addition to sex education classes. Facilitated group discussions allow the residents to express feelings and



discuss issues. For example, a discussion about rape focused on how women feel if they are raped, male victimization, and managing sexually aggressive feelings. Every effort is made to increase the child's skills to live successfully in the community.

***"We want to reward success and remedy failure."***

– Assistant Director Michael Poindexter

## Recognizing that residents are children

In keeping with the Leake and Watts Services child care philosophy, the facility tries to create an environment where the residents can experience normal childhood activities. For example, the staff celebrate holidays with presents and special meals. They also provide opportunities for residents to make presents, such as designing T-shirts or greeting cards for family members. Of course, the staff also try to teach the youths to take care of themselves, even reminding them to wash their hands before a meal.

## Enhancing opportunities for success in the community

The administrators at Woodfield recognize that the environment the child returns to will play an important role in the youth's success in the community; therefore, programming extends to the family. All family members and anyone living in the home are invited to a working session to help determine the specific problems that brought the child to Woodfield. Once problems are identified, an individualized plan is developed to provide an optimal environment for success in the community.

When Leake and Watts Services, Inc. took over the facility in 1996, there were no family visits. In recognition of the important role that families play in the lives of juveniles, the contacts have continually increased to 160 personal contacts with family members and 624 phone contacts in 2004.

Some young people will need jobs when they return to their community. Facility staff will sometimes contact the mayor of the youth's town to solicit assistance in finding a job for the juvenile upon his or her release.

Involving the family and assisting with employment are examples of ways staff demonstrate a caring attitude that goes beyond housing youth in a detention facility and, instead, seeks to provide the youth with opportunities to turn their lives around.

## Creating a caring staff culture starts with staff recruitment and training

When the parent company, Leake and Watts Services, Inc., was awarded the contract for Woodfield Detention Facility, some of the existing employees had been working at the facility for 10 years. The administration wanted to ensure that all employees supported the child care philosophy of the parent company and did not want staff to think of the youths as "just criminals." Hiring and training practices were the primary methods by which the administration implemented a caring philosophy. Establishing policies, supervising staff, and encouraging communication were additional methods.

### Hiring staff

Hiring practices influence resident safety. Woodfield struggles with the same staffing and retention issues that most facilities face, often losing experienced employees to supervisory positions in other criminal justice agencies. Woodfield uses a combination of contract and full-time staff, and vacancies are generally filled by contractors whose work habits and interactions with residents have been observed by administrators. In this way, officials prioritize hiring full-time employees who support the program philosophy.

Administrators want employees who enjoy the challenge of working with adolescents and understand that there is more to doing so than simply locking people up. They want to hire staff who have at least two years' experience in the child care field and who can be sensitive to the residents' needs. Sensitivity, cultural diversity, affinity for the profession of child care, consistency in responding to youth, and caring about kids are valued qualities that the administrators strive to maintain when making staffing decisions.

### Training

Administrators at Woodfield believe that training is a key element in establishing a strong and positive staff culture. Training exposes staff to new ideas and equips them with the skills necessary to deal effectively with residents. At Woodfield, training occurs in the holistic context of understanding youthful offenders as human beings rather than as criminals. Training topics include the following: cultural diversity, gangs (including identifying gang-related behavior and shutting it down), suicide ideation identification



and prevention, maintaining boundaries with residents, and counseling techniques.

Training is periodically adjusted to cover topics that are relevant to the residents. For example, when administrators recognized that more youths were struggling with psychiatric issues, a training program was implemented to teach staff about the management of mental illness, including distinguishing mental illness from behavior problems.

It can be expensive to provide training, but administrators believe that training is a wise investment. One example of its effectiveness is that the lack of major incidents at Woodfield resulted in reduced insurance costs for the facility.

## Staff supervision

One component of building a strong staff culture involves staff supervision. Woodfield employees receive performance evaluations on a regular basis because administrators believe that, when used properly, these are tools to help build employees' skills. At the level of the individual employee, performance evaluations provide an opportunity for supervisors to acknowledge positive attributes, and, at the level of program management, performance assessments contribute to operational consistency.

Performance is assessed in the following domains:

- Relationships with co-workers and residents,
- Knowledge of the policies,
- Documentation of incidents,
- Report writing,
- Taking initiative, and
- Punctuality.

Supervisors are discouraged from giving an employee high evaluation ratings when he or she has deficits in any area because it "robs the employee of the opportunity to grow." Employees who receive low ratings are counseled to improve their performance.

## Solving staff-related problems

### Start with the good

When a supervisor addresses a problem with a staff member's performance, the supervisor starts by pointing out the professional's positive attributes before discussing what needs to change. The supervisor tries to validate the employee and also increase his or her knowledge of acceptable options. When an employee complains about

a supervisor's decision, the assistant director has a discussion with both parties, and might explain the decision or ask the employee to read an article or a book chapter that supports the decision. The intent of the meeting is to clarify the most effective approach to use with children, and to emphasize the administration's value regarding the use of effective child care methods.

### Teamwork requires communication

Woodfield administrators recognize the importance of using a team approach to manage detained youths. Each shift supervisor meets with his or her staff before the shift to forward information from the prior shift. Each team meets monthly, and approximately 20 all-staff meetings are scheduled each year. In addition, staff are encouraged to discuss concerns and suggestions with management at any time; the director has an "open door policy." Anonymous suggestions or concerns can be dropped in a suggestion box. These approaches are designed to build a strong team that can be consistent and effective with the residents.

## Summary

Woodfield administrators have implemented many strong approaches to ensure the safety of the young people housed at the facility. While the no-touch policy may be controversial, it is implemented within the context of a caring philosophy that puts the emotional health of the child first. The programmatic efforts to expose the youths to experiences that will help them be successful in life reflect that Woodfield's mission goes beyond simply housing youthful offenders safely in detention. These professionals want to make a difference in each youth's life, even if he or she is only housed at Woodfield for a single day. The policies, practices, and programs implemented at Woodfield clearly support the mission of the parent company, Leaks and Watts Services, Inc.

### Special thanks to those we interviewed:

Mr. Michael Poindexter, Assistant Director  
Mr. Adrian Robertson, Supervisor  
Mr. Gaspar Santiago, Senior Social Worker  
Ms. Linda Scott, Teacher  
Ms. Janet Parker, Facility Nurse  
Dr. Peter Masalla, Pediatrician  
Ms. Brendalynn Walker, Transportation  
Mr. Patrick Walker, Recreation Specialist  
Mr. George Walters, Program Director



## LOGIC MODEL: Woodfield Secure Detention



### OUTCOMES

- Increased opportunities for youth to report problems
- Increased level of staff skills
- Increased reports by residents of low level problems
- Reduction in disruptive behavior
- Reduction in assaultive behavior
- Increased collaboration among staff members
- Increased communication among staff
- Reduced low-level problem behavior
- Increase residents' feelings of safety
- Reduced violent behavior
- Reduced sexual assaults
- Reduced insurance cost



### IMPACT

- **Safe and secure environments for inmates and staff**



### IMMEDIATE OUTCOMES/ INDICATORS OF CHANGE

- Number of staff tested on policies and procedures
- Number of hours of staff training
- Number of staff hired following positive experience as contractors
- Number of staff trained in Handle With Care techniques
- Number of notifications to child protective services following intake screen for child abuse victimization
- Number of intake screenings that identify gang affiliation
- Number of medical problems identified at intake
- Score on staff performance plans
- Number of incidents occurring while youth are in line with hands behind back
- Number of hours youth are involved in programming
- Number of points youth receive for positive participation in school and recreation
- Number of youth taking part in Friday Movie Night
- Number of youth required to sign form confirming point loss
- Number of grievances initiated
- Number of grievances resolved
- Number of disciplinary actions taken with residents
- Number of time outs
- Number of room restrictions
- Number of 20 minute physical restraints
- Number of 40 minute physical restraints
- Number of 40+ minute physical restraints
- Number of mechanical restraints
- Number of assaults on residents
- Number of incident reports
- Number of formal investigations
- Number of assault incidents resulting in conviction
- Number of assault incidents resulting in referrals to child protective services



### PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

- Careful policy development and documentation
- Extensive staff training program
- Priority placed on supervision and performance plans
- Structured intake process that screens for child abuse victimization and gang affiliation
- Medical screening w/in 12 hours of intake
- Written rules provided to residents at intake
- Staff recruited only after successful period as contract employee
- Staff trained in the Bruce Chapman Handle with Care techniques
- Collaboration across education and housing units for Friday night party
- Careful transfer of information across shifts
- Ongoing efforts to ensure facility is clean
- Periodically testing staff on the written policies and procedures
- Staff retested on policies and procedures when scoring less than 85 percent
- Floor observation to ensure consistent use of procedures
- Emphasis on verbal communication and counseling as primary child management tools
- Residents walk in line with hands behind back
- Use of a behavior management system
  - o Residents scored every day on participation in school and recreation activities
  - o Residents required to sign form acknowledging when they lose points
- Friday night movies and late bedtime for those earning enough points during the week
- Implementation of grievance process
- Youth informed of and provided number to 1-800 child abuse hotline
- Collect data on all incidents
- Provide programming for youth



### RESOURCES

- Child care philosophy
- Leadership values safety
- Staff culture values safety
- Staff training
- Equipment
- Facility/Space
- Partnerships with school and probation department
- Location



### NOTE:

*This logic model is provided to assist with replication of aspects of the Woodfield Cottage Secure Detention operation that enhance safety through classification and housing procedures. Logic models provide a roadmap for implementation and program monitoring. It provides a logical sequence of related events that connect the program plans with the results. Remember, it is critical to bring stakeholders together to design your own logic model to reach your intended goals.*

# BUILDING BLOCKS

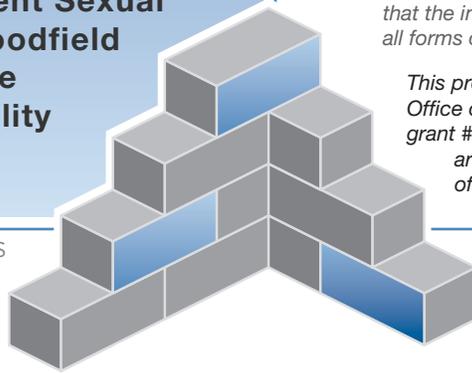
## for Institutional Safety

APRIL 2007

▶ **Promising Practices to Prevent Resident Sexual Assaults at Woodfield Cottage Secure Detention Facility**

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ISSUE TWO IN A SERIES



Keep a lookout for new **Building Blocks Bulletins** over the next few months.

**Project staff:**

- Peggy Heil, *Project Manager*
- Kim English, *Research Director*
- Diane Pasini-Hill, *Manager Special Projects*
- Linda Harrison, *Senior Statistical Analyst*
- Pat Lounders, *Research Specialist*

*The Division of Criminal Justice is documenting practices that were designed to promote safety in jails and juvenile facilities and decrease inmate/resident sexual assaults. While these practices appear promising, further research is necessary to validate whether these are indeed effective interventions. It is also important to stress that the implementation of promising practices does not ensure that all forms of violence have been effectively eliminated.*

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Colorado Department of Public Safety  
Division of Criminal Justice  
**Office of Research & Statistics**

700 Kipling Street, Suite 1000  
Denver, CO 80215