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INTERNAL AUDIT DEPARTMENT

**Audit Report
on**

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

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Executive Director

Linda S. Reyes, PH.D.
Deputy Executive Director

Assessment and Evaluation

INTERNAL AUDIT DIRECTOR

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For additional copies of this report, please request 06-5



INTERNAL AUDIT DEPARTMENT

TO: Texas Youth Commission Board Members
Pete Alfaro, TYC Board Chair
Don Bethel, TYC Board Vice Chair
Stephen K. Fryer, TYC Board Member
Patsy Reed Guest, TYC Board Member
Bill Mahomes, Jr., TYC Board Member
Gogi Dickson, Ph.D., TYC Board Member
Juan S. Muñoz, Ph.D., TYC Board Member

Dwight Harris, Executive Director, Texas Youth Commission

FROM: Karin Hill, Internal Audit Director

DATE: September 21, 2006

RE: Results of the Assessment and Evaluation Audit

Attached for your approval is our report on the audit of the Texas Youth Commission's (TYC's) Assessment and Evaluation process. The objective of this audit was to determine the effectiveness of the agency's assessment and evaluation processes at the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit (Marlin).

Marlin's assessment and evaluation of youth's needs is crucial in determining a youth's placement to ensure their specialized treatment needs can be served. Inaccurate or incorrect assessments could extend a youth's time in TYC or result in needs not being met. Data for youth who arrived and left Marlin during fiscal year 2005 were analyzed to determine how often youth were assigned to multiple permanent placements and/or had changes in their specialized treatment needs in the Correctional Care System since leaving Marlin.

Our review showed that the assessment and evaluation process at Marlin is effective. Although youth are often assigned to more than one facility after Marlin, our review identified that this was not due to the quality or accuracy of Marlin's assessments. Moving youth affects the treatment process because it removes them from a setting they have learned to work in and requires them to re-establish trusting relationships with a new group of staff/youth. The agency understands this and as possible limits moves. Additionally, relatively few youth records reflect changes in specialized treatment needs. The agency has four specialized treatment programs – mental health, sexual behavior, capital and serious violent offender, and chemical dependency – of which only mental health treatment need levels should change. Review of treatment needs for youth in our scope identified that specialized treatment needs did not often change and when they did, with few exceptions, the change was reflected in mental health needs. Finally, surveys

and interviews of field staff confirmed that Marlin's assessments are accurate and rarely require re-accomplishment.

Due to a current project underway by management we did not evaluate the assessment process for efficiency. However, review and analysis of timelines – arrival at Marlin to the completion of the assessment process to the assignment of the next institution and transport from Marlin – resulted in some concerns regarding youth movement. The agency has established a goal of having youth to their next location within 45 days of arriving at Marlin. In fiscal year 2005, youth were at Marlin an average of 56 days; however, 14 of those were waiting to be moved to their next location. We will review this further during an audit of population management during fiscal year 2007.

Management concurs with the results of our work. We appreciate the cooperation and assistance provided to us by the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit staff as well as other facilities we visited or contacted and Central Office management.

cc: Linda Reyes, Ph.D., Deputy Executive Director

This report presents the results of our audit of the Texas Youth Commission's (TYC's) Assessment and Evaluation process. The objective of this audit was to determine the effectiveness of the agency's assessment and evaluation processes at the Marlin Orientation and Assessment Unit (Marlin).

To accomplish the audit objective, we interviewed staff and managers and reviewed key policies and procedures, as well as documentation associated with the assessment process. This audit included youth who arrived and left Marlin during fiscal year 2005; and more specifically, those who had a change in their level of specialized treatment needs and/or had been assigned to more than one permanent placement after leaving Marlin. In fiscal year 2005, 2,343 youth arrived and left Marlin – 1,274 of them had changes in their treatment needs and/or were assigned to more than one permanent placement after Marlin.

This audit was conducted in accordance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* and with *Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards*.

Marlin is responsible for orienting youth to the agency's programs and conducting assessments and evaluations to determine how each youth can best be served. The evaluation process is six weeks long; it begins with intake upon the youth's arrival; proceeds through classification of the youth based on their committing offense, and then includes a series of medical, educational, psychological, and specialized treatment needs assessments. The information from this process is summarized in the youth's Assessment Individual Case Plan and forwarded to the Centralized Placement Unit (CPU) who is responsible for determining placement and arranging transportation for the youth.

However, for the assessment process and moving youth to their permanent placement to remain on schedule, three factors must be present: 1) staff vacancies for critical positions in the assessment process at Marlin must be minimal; 2) the number of youth arriving at Marlin must be manageable; and 3) the other institutions must have available space for new youth. Two of these factors are completely out of Marlin's control.

Marlin's assessment and evaluation process is effective and accurate.

An accurate assessment of youth's specialized treatment needs is critical in deciding where they will be placed once the orientation and assessment process at Marlin is completed. If the assessment process does not accurately identify a youth's needs, the CPU could inadvertently assign him to a facility that does not have the program he requires. This would likely require the youth to be reassigned to another facility, which could delay treatment – potentially extending the time required for the youth to complete required treatment before being released from TYC.

Youth movements are not a result of inaccurate needs assessment by Marlin staff. Youth can be moved for a number of reasons, to include: treatment needs, behavior

management, and population management. Multiple movements of youth slow down the treatment process by requiring youth to re-establish trusting relationships with treatment staff. Of the 2,343 youth who arrived at and departed from Marlin during fiscal year 2005, 1,213 (52%) were assigned to more than one facility in their first year at TYC. Review of the masterfiles for a sample of these youth identified that youth are reassigned for a number of reasons, but not because of inaccurate assessments by Marlin.

Mental Health is the specialized treatment program that most often results in youth moving to another institution. The agency identifies specialized treatment needs in the following areas: medical, mental health, mental retardation, sexual behavior, capital and serious violent offender, and chemical dependency. Needs are assessed based on the youth's committing offense(s), and the results of the evaluation process. When assessed properly, with the exception of mental health, specialized treatment needs should not change.

Most youth with mental health conditions have already been diagnosed prior to their commitment to TYC. These youth are assessed at Marlin by qualified mental health professionals to determine the severity of their conditions and need for mental health services. Severity is primarily determined on the basis of a youth's ability to function in a particular environment. Those whose functioning is seriously compromised are prioritized for placement in the Corsicana Residential Treatment Center or Crockett State School mental health programs. While those who can function in a regular TYC institution with some adjunct support from on-site clinical staff are placed in a regular program. Mental health conditions, however, are subject to change. They may improve with medication and the stable structure of an institutional environment or they may decline due to the youth having problems adjusting to incarceration or other stressors such as family events that occur while the youth is in TYC. A youth whose mental health seriously deteriorates while in a regular program would have a greater need for more intensive mental health services and would be transferred to one of the agency's mental health programs. Some mental health disorders may emerge and be diagnosed for the first time while the youth is in TYC. This could occur at any time during the youth's stay and require further assessment and/or more intensive treatment services.

According to the information in the Correctional Care System, of the 2,343 youth who arrived at and departed from Marlin during fiscal year 2005, 215 (9%) had a change in specialized treatment need after leaving Marlin. All but 12 of these youth's needs that changed were in the area of mental health while the others were for chemical dependency treatment needs. Substance abuse disorders are diagnosed primarily on the basis of the youth's self report regarding extent of use and impact on functional abilities. Occasionally, a youth will self-report much more extensive substance involvement than he or she reported during their initial assessment only after they have been in placement for a time. Placement in Chemical Dependency programs, however, must be prioritized off of intake assessments conducted at Marlin in order not to negatively impact a youth's length of stay. According to Information Resources Division staff, field staff's ability to make changes in non-mental health specialized treatment needs in the Correctional Care System was a result of a program anomaly which has since been resolved.

Institution staff considers the Marlin assessments of youth to be accurate. In addition to our work in the Correctional Care System and review of youth masterfiles, surveys and interviews of institutional staff reported that Marlin's work is accurate and re-accomplishment of assessment is rarely needed. Institutional psychologists stated that they had not noted any glaring inaccuracies in Marlin's assessments and that they were generally comfortable with the results. Confidence in Marlin's assessment process by the other institutions affirms the results of our review and also supports the implementation of a previous audit recommendation to eliminate duplication of assessments conducted at Marlin.

Management is evaluating the assessment process for time efficiencies.

Agency management has established a goal of youth spending no more than 45 days at Marlin. Meeting this goal helps maintain the schedule for Resocialization[®] and ensures that complete and appropriate educational services are provided. As discussed earlier, the assessment process is a six-week process – approximately 42 calendar days, which if the goal of 45 days is to be met, allows only three days to determine where to place a youth, arrange for their transportation, and move the youth to their next permanent placement.

A delay in placing and transporting youth not only affect the youths ability to progress in Resocialization[®], but also requires Marlin to ensure these youth are occupied at the same time as they are processing other youth through the assessment process. Additionally, delays in placement can increase the Average Daily Population (ADP) at Marlin, potentially impacting their ability to keep the assessment process moving.

Analysis of youth who entered and left Marlin in fiscal year 2005 identified that on average, youth were assigned to Marlin for 56 days, well above the 45-day target set by management. This time can be divided into two segments - time in the assessment process and the time the CPU needs to determine placement and arrange for transportation. Further analysis showed that an average of 42 of the 56 days youth were at Marlin was spent in the assessment process, with a third of the youth spending more than 45 days in assessment. In addition to the time youth spent in the assessment process; half of them waited more than 14 days to be transported to their next permanent placement.

Rehabilitation Services staff are currently evaluating the assessment process as part of their fiscal year 2006 business plan. Staff are currently reviewing the various activities performed in the assessment process at Marlin. This evaluation process is designed to identify those steps that can achieve efficiencies and economies through streamlining, eliminating, consolidating, or shifting responsibility to the institutions. While addressing efficiencies in the assessment process will reduce youth's time at Marlin, the evaluation process is not the only factor affecting youth's length of stay at Marlin. Therefore, the goal of 45 days will be difficult to meet without addressing the other factors.

Further analysis of TYC's population management practices is needed.

As discussed earlier, the ability to get youth to their next placement within 45 days of arriving at Marlin is largely dependent on other factors, one being the other facilities having space available to receive youth. In fiscal year 2005, seven institutions were over capacity for more than nine months of the year. There are several reasons why a facility may not have the space to receive youth. For example, the past two hurricane seasons have caused evacuation of facilities to ensure youth safety, one for a few days, and the other for more than four months. Evacuated youth are transported to other facilities, not only occupying space, but also requiring services. As a result, the facilities that take in the evacuated youth must adjust their schedules to accommodate them. When hurricane Rita damaged the Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility, more than 300 youth had to be relocated to other facilities. As repairing Al Price was a lengthy process, the youth were mainstreamed into the other facilities, which in many cases overpopulated those locations. As a result, some facilities did not have the capacity to accept new youth from Marlin.

Other reasons for which facilities cannot accept youth from Marlin include overpopulation and moratoriums. Moratoriums are designed to promote a balanced campus environment; they are requested by facilities and granted by Central Office Juvenile Corrections Directors for a number of reasons. They may be placed on a campus to reestablish safety and security; to control the number of youth with certain characteristics – such as sex offenders or gang members, that influence campus culture; or due to critical staffing shortages.

Population management is critical to the agency's success. It affects its ability to provide a safe and therapeutic environment in which to serve the youth committed to TYC as well as ensures that youth are released from institutions at the appropriate time. Past audit work in Student Transportation and on the Centralized Placement Unit has identified that the agency has effective processes over those areas. Population management was not in the scope of this audit. Due to its importance to the agency and the mission as well as its impact on the agency's ability to move youth into a permanent placement for timely continuance of Resocialization[®], population management will be included in the fiscal year 2007 audit plan.