



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WELFARE**  
OFFICE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES  
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January 11, 2010

Dear Chief Probation Officer,

I'm writing to you as a follow up to my January 8, 2009 letter related to the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services', BJJS, Youth Development Center/Youth Forestry Camp, YDC/YFC, system's immediate response to the findings included in the recent National Survey of Youth in Custody publication titled "Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Facilities Reported by Youth, 2008-09".

As stated in my letter, after having an opportunity to review the information contained in the report, the Department of Public Welfare has planned visits to each facility named in the report to conduct an investigation to ensure the safety of our youth. As the first step in this process, BJJS assembled a team of directors and other management staff who traveled to Cresson Secure Treatment Unit, CSTU, on January 9, 2010 to conduct face-to-face interviews with each of the youth at the facility.

Prior to arriving at the facility five teams of two interviewers from other facilities and BJJS's Central Office were established and a standardized questionnaire was developed. Each of the thirty eight residents was interviewed separately and upon completion of their interview was kept away from youth who had not been interviewed.

Information resulting from the interviews included one youth disclosing that he was told by other youth that two individuals currently at the facility had oral sex several months ago, yet was unable to provide specific information other than the names of the youth because the event occurred prior to his arrival. Further investigation revealed that the incident occurred on May 18, 2008 and included touching of the genital area by two residents. At the time of the allegation a copy of the facility's video tape of the incident was reviewed by probation, parents were notified of the incident, counselors met with each of the youth and they were moved to separate units.

Another youth reported to interviewers that he heard a youth at the facility talk about a female staff member and a former resident, yet hadn't seen anything and was unable to provide any additional details other than the youth's name. However, the youth in question is reportedly in another juvenile placement and will be included as part of a follow up investigation.

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The third and final report was by a youth who stated that “kids do weird things to each other,” yet was unable to provide specifics as to what made him feel this way or specific events that were occurring.

As part of the interview process youth were asked demographic questions such as their name, age, county of residence and length of time they’d been at the facility. In addition, youth were asked if they were aware of any sexual contact occurring at the facility and if at CSTU or any other juvenile facility has anyone ever forced them to have any kind of sexual contact.

As part of the interview process and prior to asking the youth questions related to sexual contact, the interviewers provided them with a definition of sexual contact. More specifically, the following definition from the National Youth in Custody Survey was utilized:

*During this interview we will be asking you questions about sexual contact that may occur in juvenile facilities. By sexual contact, we mean sexual intercourse, oral sex, anal sex or any other touching or rubbing of someone else’s private parts in a sexual way. By private parts, we mean any part of the body that would be covered by a bathing suit. Sexual contact with young people is not always with strangers but can be with someone they know well like another youth, a staff member, teacher, counselor, or minister of any gender.*


*The survey questions ask about sexual contact you may have had while you’ve been here or at another facility. Please think about any time when this might have happened with other youth or with facility staff. Please include any kind of sexual contact, whether you wanted to do it or not.*

Based on their responses to these initial questions, the interview process included asking youth more specific questions related to the identified sexual contact. However, none of the youth at CSTU indicated that they had sexual contact while at the facility or at another juvenile facility they had been at and therefore these additional questions were not asked.

Although none of the youth currently at CSTU indicated that they’d had sexual contact while at the facility, please be assured that both the facility and BJJS will continue to review and address the findings outlined in the recent National Survey of Youth in Custody publication.

As we move forward with the follow up investigations at CSTU and begin conducting interviews at other facilities we will ensure that probation offices are provided with regular updates on our efforts and findings. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me via email at [ansnyder@state.pa.us](mailto:ansnyder@state.pa.us) or at 717-363-1024.

Respectfully,



Andrew Snyder, Director  
Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services

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