

Dept. of Corrections: Monitor notes “significant progress” at Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake

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Madison — The court-appointed Monitor for Lincoln Hills School/Copper Lake School (LHS/CLS) filed an encouraging report on conditions at the facilities today, which included increased classroom time for youth, the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) doubling the number of consent decree provisions with which it is in substantial compliance, and continued positive atmosphere at the facilities.

“The Monitor did not encounter a single staff or youth that did not have a positive attitude. The overall operations of LHS/CLS are the best it has been since the Monitor was appointed,” the Monitor noted in the report. “Staff and leadership’s commitment to youth and to this reform effort is evident in every aspect of the operation.”

Under the Evers Administration, DOC has for years been in either partial or substantial compliance with all 50 provisions of the consent decree stemming from a 2017 lawsuit against the previous administration related to unsafe conditions at the schools. The 16th Monitor’s Report filed today shows DOC has doubled the number of provisions with which it is in substantial compliance, from 15 to 30, and remains in partial compliance with the other 20 provisions.

“In one four-year term under this Administration, our staff at the Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) has transformed the system of care at the schools, moving away from past, punitive practices to a model based on evidence-based treatment of youth in our care,” said DOC Secretary Kevin Carr. “Seeing such a big jump, to being in substantial compliance with 60% of the items in the consent decree, is affirmation of the work put in by our staff and a testament to the leadership in DJC.

I'm very proud of the changes they've made at LHS/CLS."

This latest quarterly report from the Monitor included a list of facility improvements, including installation of video game rooms in the living units, installation of a new video phone system in

the living units to help youth better communicate with their families, and the introduction of video production software in the schools' Music & Arts Initiative.

This Report also praised the Quality Assurance Program this Administration has put in place at LHS/CLS, which the Monitor states has far exceeded expectations and is second to none.

"DJC has a program that other jurisdictions should model. Critical information is readily available to the leadership which allows them to make proactive, data driven decisions that increases the safety of youth and staff," the Monitor reported.

Staffing remained a concern in this reporting period, which ran from November through January. In general, over the three-month period, youth spent more time in their rooms in November and December due to lower staffing levels, when the facilities were running at 50% of normal staffing levels on many days due to vacant positions and staff taking leave. However, as the Report notes, youth spent more time out of their rooms and received education in the school building more often in January. Also, since January 31, youth have received education in the school building every weekday, except for some youth placed in the high-risk Skills Development Programs due to disruptive or physically aggressive behavior.

DJC aims to have youth out of their rooms from at least 8am-8pm every day. However, on days with lower staffing levels, the schools have not always been able to meet that goal, keeping youth in their rooms in operational confinement as a necessary way to maintain safety during times of lower staffing levels. Over the last five full weeks, excluding the two high-risk Skills Development

Program units, the combined living units at the facility have received 94% of the goal of 12 hours of out-of-room time.

"The significant hiring in the youth counselor classifications and reduced population, should provide for more available staff which will result (and has resulted in the last couple of weeks) in youth spending more time out of their room, off units, and in the

school area,” the Monitor wrote in the report.

Complete reports from the Monitor can be found [here](#) on DOC’s website.