

Independent Ombudsman

for the

Texas Juvenile Justice Department



First Quarter Report FY 24
September 1, 2023 to November 30, 2023

INTRODUCTION

This is the first Quarterly Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 to be submitted by the Office of Independent Ombudsman for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) as per the Texas Human Resources Code, Chapter 261. This report is intended for the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House, members of the State Legislature, the TJJD Governing Board, the TJJD Executive Director, and the Texas State Auditor. This report will cover the reporting period of September 2023 through November 2023. It should be noted, this is not an all-inclusive report, but rather a summary of significant findings during the reporting period.

STRATEGIC INTENT

The Office of Independent Ombudsman (OIO) was established for the purpose of investigating, evaluating, and securing the rights of children committed to the Juvenile Justice Department, including a child released under supervision before final discharge. Legislation enacted during the 84th Legislative Session (Senate Bill 1630), expanded those duties to include county post-adjudication facilities and contract facilities where county post-adjudicated youth are placed. To fulfill the duties of the office, OIO staff regularly visit all TJJD secure facilities, halfway houses, parole offices, all county post-adjudication facilities and county contract care programs. Currently, the Office of Independent Ombudsman conducts regular site visits at 107 facilities and probation/parole offices that meet the definition added by Senate Bill 1630, 84th Legislative Session.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During this reporting period, the Office of Independent Ombudsman conducted 98 facility site visits and interviewed 768 youth offenders (Refer to the Annex for a listing of facility site visit locations). During this quarter, the OIO received six individual cases and closed three. One individual case was closed as sustained.

SYSTEMIC ISSUES

Systemic Issues are recurring findings within a single facility or across multiple facilities occurring over a period of time which substantially interfere with youth rights, or the delivery of services. The Juvenile Justice Department has experienced staffing issues at all five State Secure facilities. This issue has been pervasive for more than 12 consecutive months. This issue is related to several career positions within facilities; however, it is most volatile with Juvenile Correctional Officers. The Juvenile Justice Department has experienced high turnover rates with the inability to recruit, train and properly staff facilities to keep pace with the demand and maintain industry acceptable staff to youth ratio.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

The Office of Independent Ombudsman (OIO) is required by statute to promote awareness of the Office and the services provided. This is accomplished through various initiatives. The Ombudsman routinely meets with civic and advocacy groups to discuss issues, trends in juvenile justice and concerns with youth rights. In addition, the Office of Independent Ombudsman maintains a public web page describing the duties of the Office and how the Ombudsman may be contacted, either by phone, mail or e-mail. In addition, the OIO periodically mails informational brochures regarding services of the OIO to the parents of youth newly committed to TJJD. In order to facilitate contact from youth in the facilities as well as the public, the OIO maintains a hotline that is answered 24 hours a day. The Deputy Ombudsman distribute posters containing the OIO's hotline number to the facilities that are routinely visited as well as educating youth on complaint procedures.

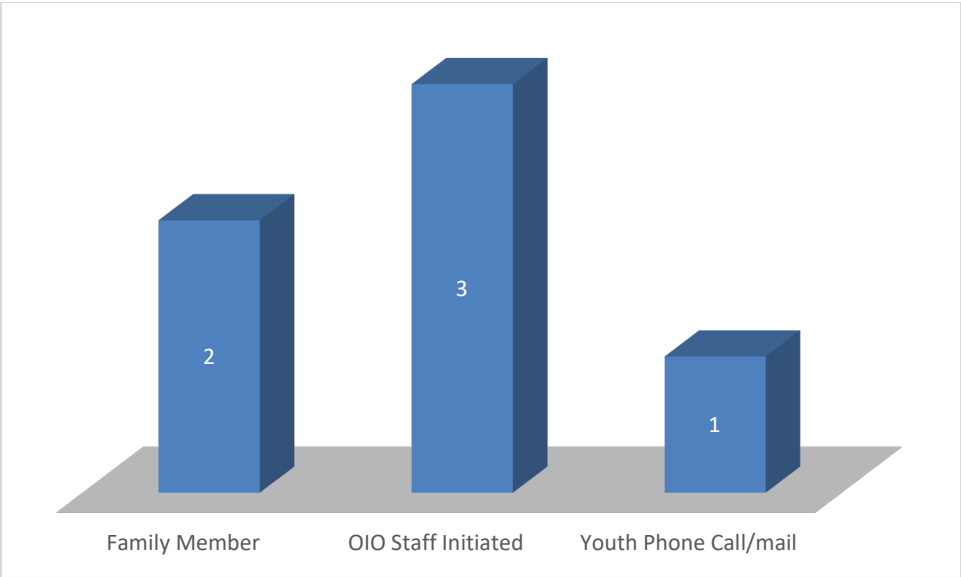
OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Accounting of Site Visits, Youth Contact and Individual Cases

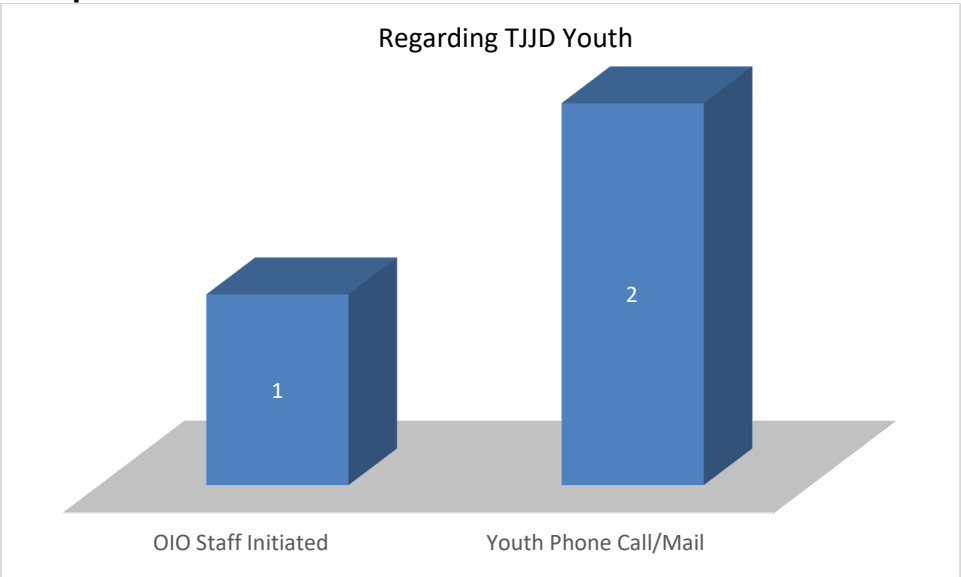
	1st Quarter FY23	4th Quarter FY23	1st Quarter FY 24	FY24 Total
TJJD/Contract Site Visits	41	27	28	28
County Post Adjudicated/Contract Facility Site Visits	62	71	70	70
Number of Youth Interviewed	763	768	768	768
Number of Youth Interviews Conducted	878	889	904	904
Closed Cases	4	1	3	3

During the first quarter of FY 24, the OIO received six complaints, all involving TJJD youth. This is an increase of 100% from the first quarter of FY 23.

Complaints Received-First Quarter FY 24



Complaints Received-First Quarter FY 23



Complaints Received by Facility-First Quarter FY 24

		Total for Facility	Due Process	Facility Conditions	Safety Concern
TJJD/Contract Facilities					
	Evins RJC	1	0	0	1
	Giddings State School	2	2	0	0
	McLannan County SJCF	3	1	1	1

Complaints Received by Facility-First Quarter FY 23

		Total for Facility	Due Process	Medical
TJJD/Contract Facilities				
	Evins-Phoenix	1	1	0
	McLennan County SJCF	1	0	1
	McLennan RTC	1	0	1

Closed Cases

The OIO closed three cases during the first quarter of FY 24, all involved TJJD youth. This is a decrease of 25.0% from the first quarter of FY 23.

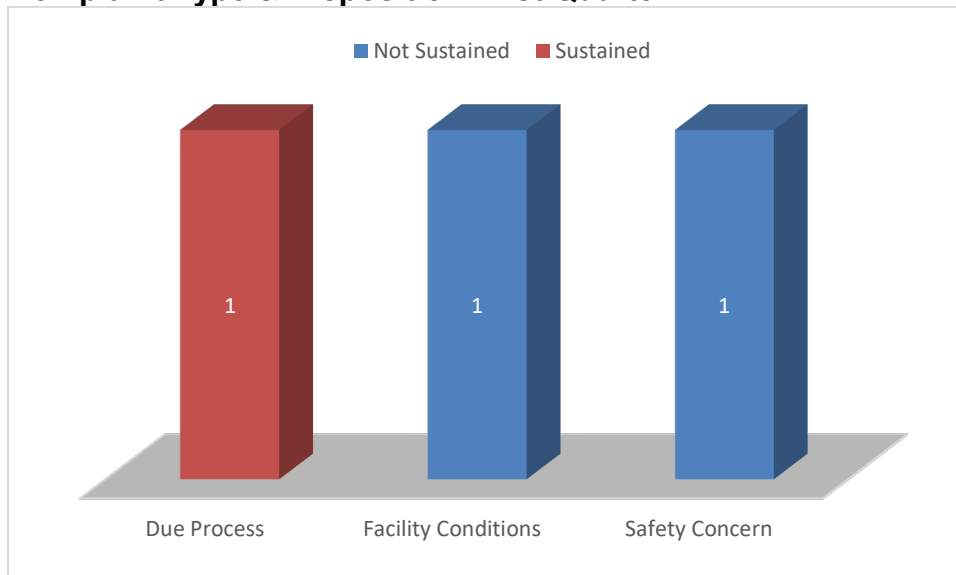
Sustained-There is sufficient corroborated information to warrant noting and a follow-up response/action plan from the facility.

Not Sustained-There is insufficient information or evidence to prove or disprove the allegation.

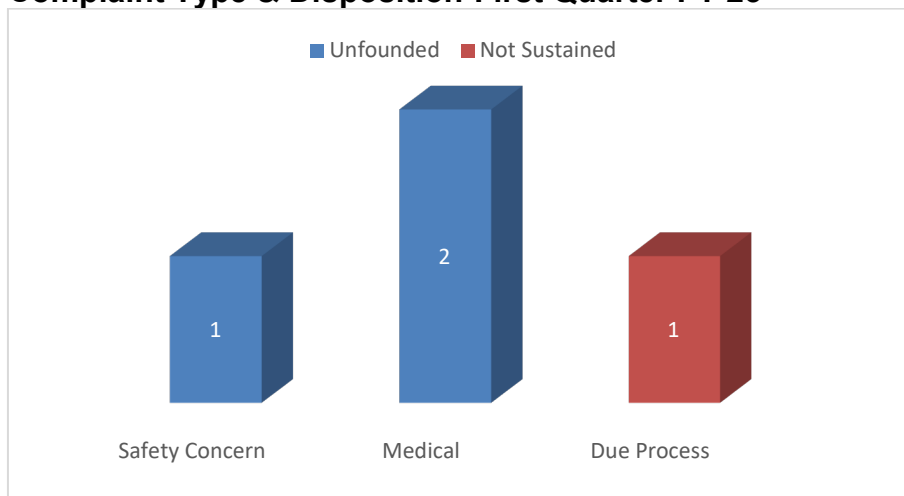
Unfounded-The complaint is without merit or is within applicable law or policy.

Not within OIO Scope: The complaint is non-criminal in nature and after review, is determined to be outside the duties of the OIO.

Complaint Type & Disposition-First Quarter FY 24



Complaint Type & Disposition-First Quarter FY 23

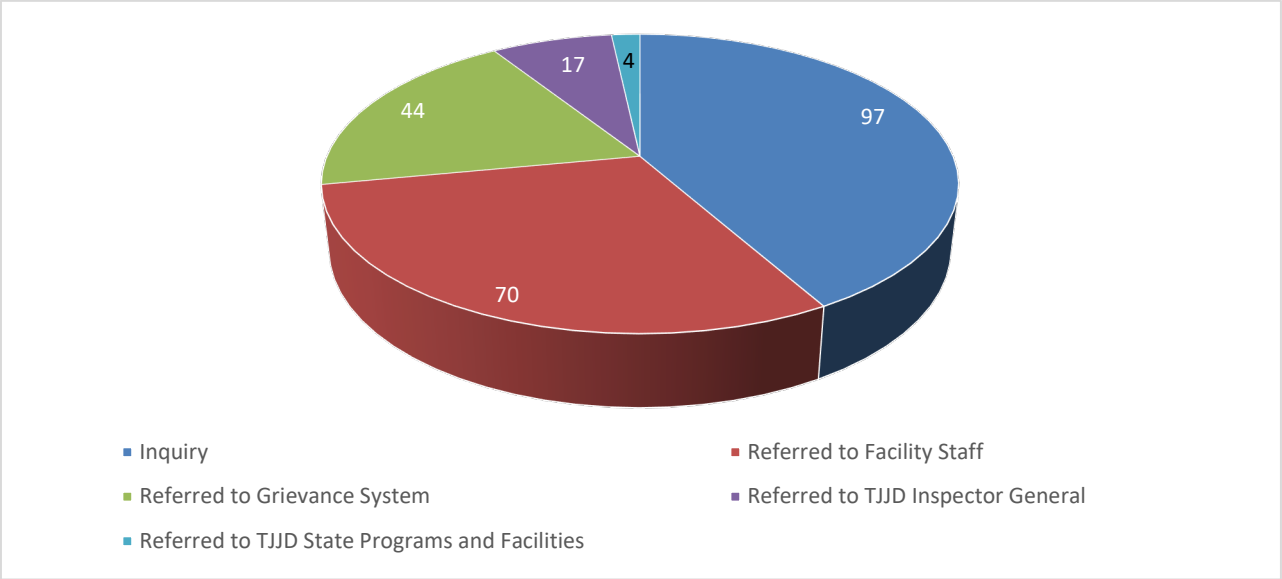


**Note: The Independent Ombudsman generally does not make findings regarding the quality or appropriateness of the care delivered. Unless otherwise noted, the medical cases in this report involve only issues of access to health care services.*

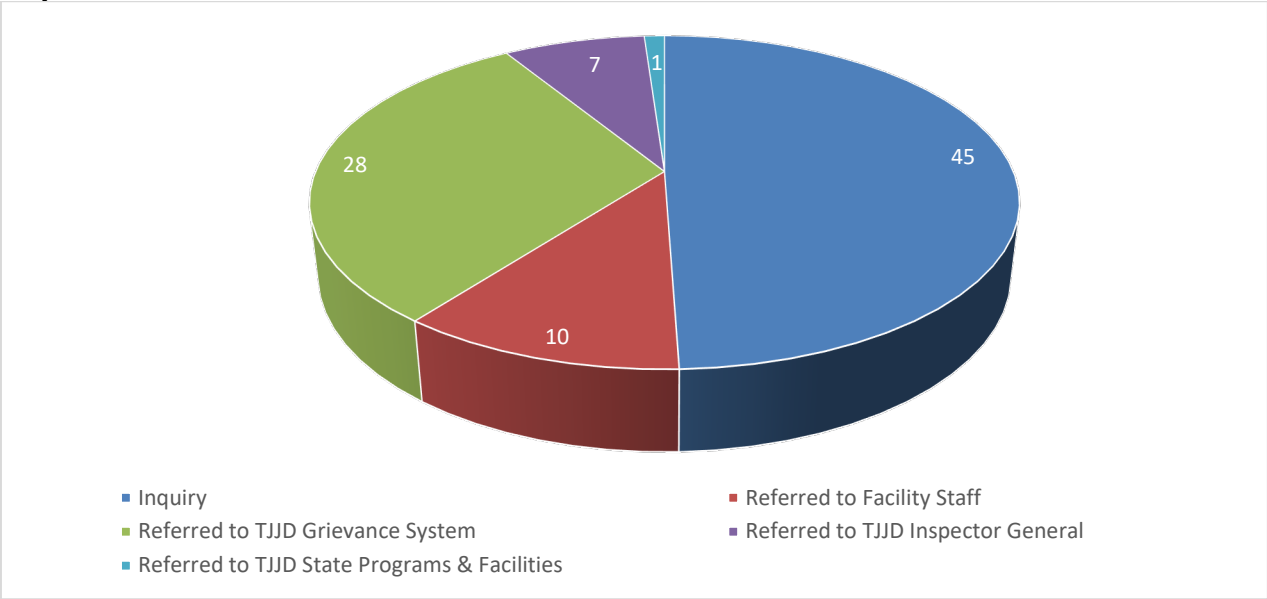
Inquiries and Referrals

The OIO receives numerous inquiries and complaints that upon review are either outside the scope of the OIO, a matter that should be addressed by facility staff or grievance process, or would be better addressed by another agency or group. The OIO received 280 inquiries and referrals during the first quarter of FY 24, 232 related to TJJD and 48 related to county post-adjudicated facilities. When compared to the first quarter of FY 23, this represents an increase of 154.5%.

Inquiries/Referrals for TJJD-First Quarter FY 24



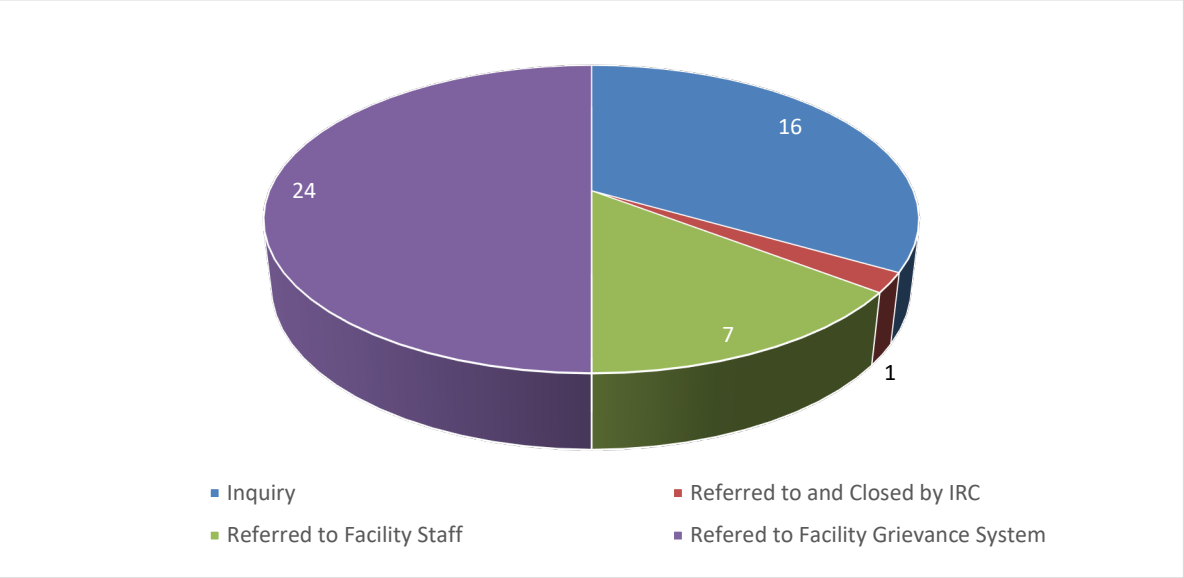
Inquiries/Referrals for TJJD-First Quarter FY 23



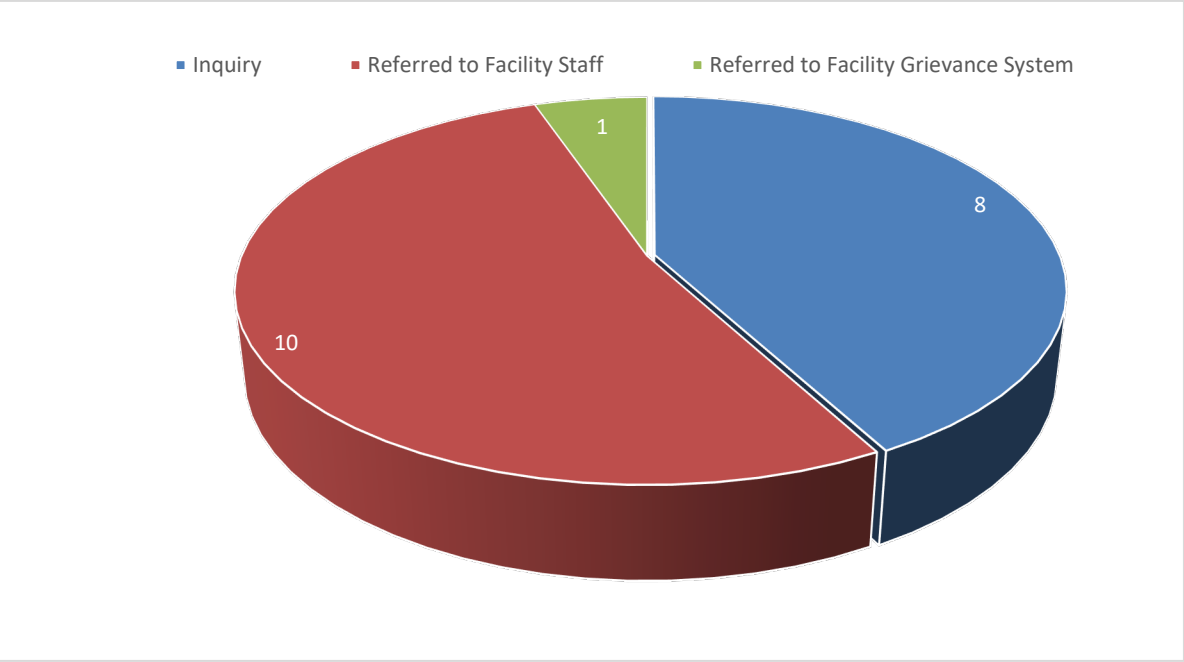
Referrals to Office of Inspector General (OIG)-Allegations that are criminal in nature are referred to OIG for investigation.

Referrals to TJJD Administrative Investigation Division (AID)-Allegations of staff misconduct related to policy violations are referred to AID.

Inquiries/Referrals for County Post-Adjudicated Facilities-First Quarter FY 24



Inquiries/Referrals for County Post-Adjudicated Facilities-First Quarter FY 23



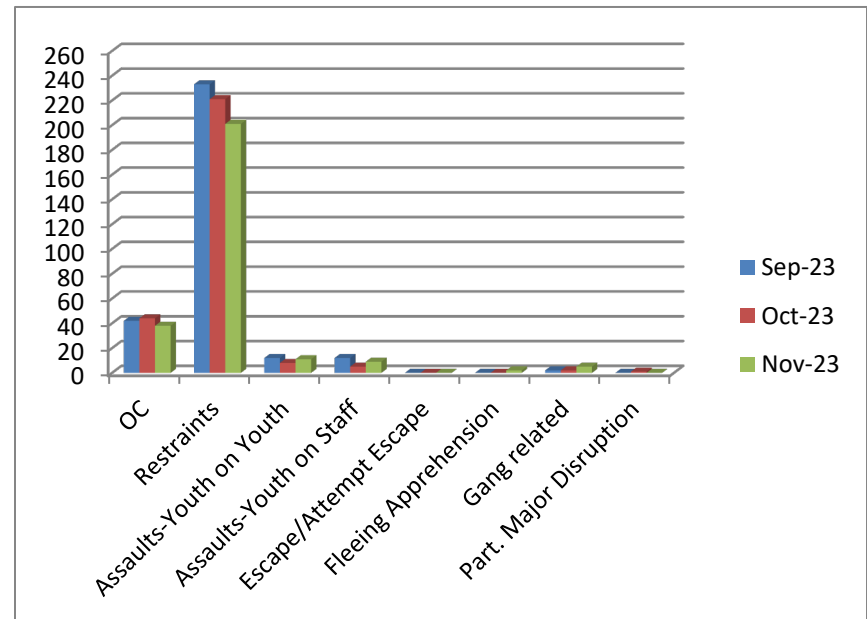
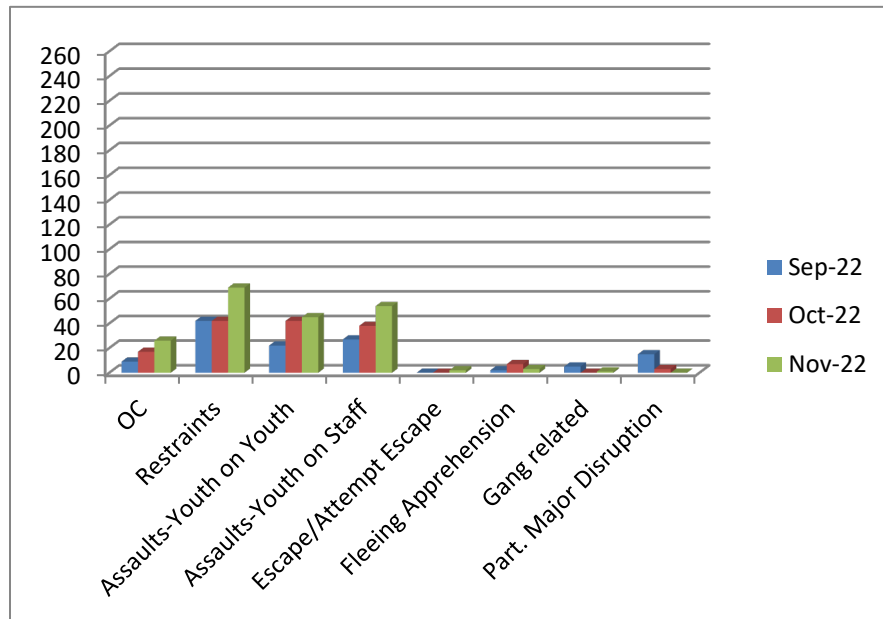
INCIDENT TRENDS FOR TJJD SECURE FACILITIES

The OIO reviews on a monthly basis at the secure correctional facilities the number of incidents involving the use of OC pepper spray, the number of youth restrained, assaults involving youth on youth and youth on staff, escapes and attempted escapes, fleeing apprehensions, gang activities, and major disruptions. These metrics give the OIO some indication of the environment related to the safety and security of all the youth offenders as well as the staff within a particular facility. These metrics are by no means an absolute indicator and should be taken into context and combined with other factors when drawing conclusions regarding a particular facility.

Evins RJC

	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22
OC	9	17	26
Restraints	42	42	69
Assaults-Youth on Youth	22	42	45
Assaults-Youth on Staff	27	38	54
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	2
Fleeing Apprehension	2	7	3
Gang related	5	0	1
Part. Major Disruption	15	3	0

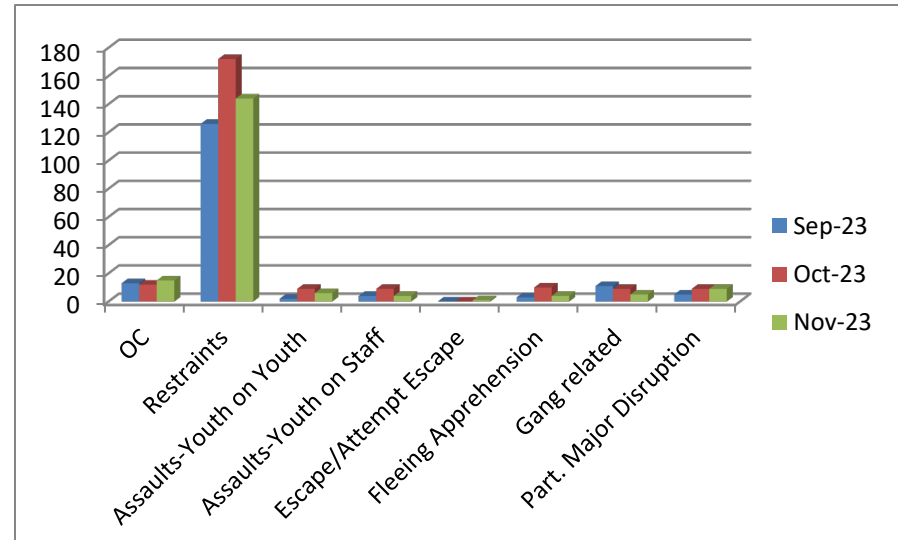
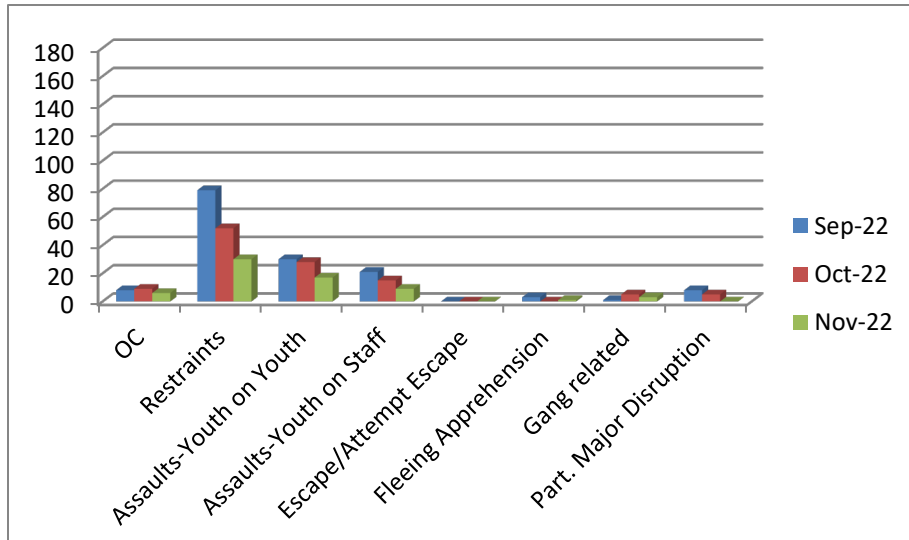
	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC	42	44	38
Restraints	233	221	201
Assaults-Youth on Youth	12	8	11
Assaults-Youth on Staff	12	5	9
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	0	0	2
Gang related	2	2	5
Part. Major Disruption	0	1	0



Gainesville State School

	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22
OC	8	9	6
Restraints	79	52	30
Assaults-Youth on Youth	30	28	17
Assaults-Youth on Staff	21	15	9
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	3	0	1
Gang related	1	5	3
Part. Major Disruption	8	5	0

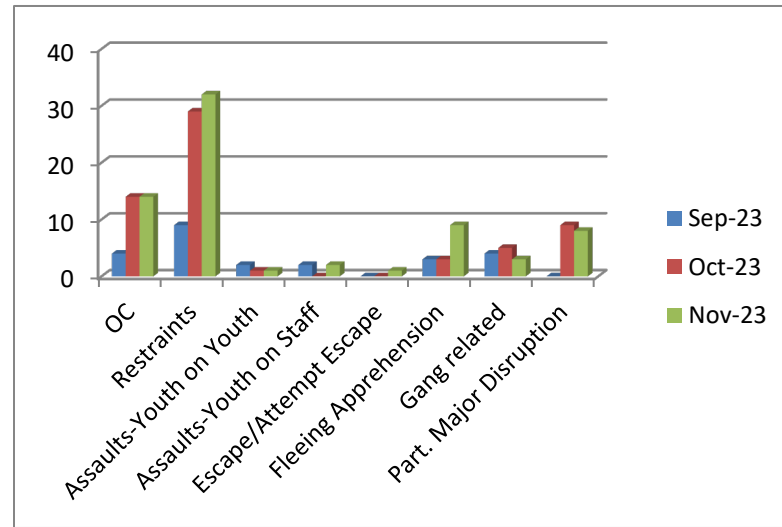
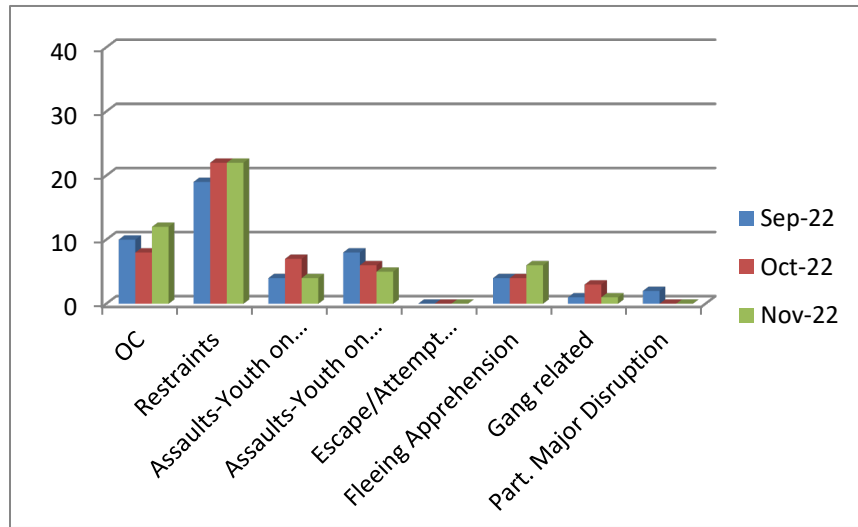
	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC	13	12	15
Restraints	126	172	144
Assaults-Youth on Youth	2	9	6
Assaults-Youth on Staff	4	9	4
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	1
Fleeing Apprehension	3	10	4
Gang related	11	9	5
Part. Major Disruption	5	9	9



Giddings State School

	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22
OC	10	8	12
Restraints	19	22	22
Assaults-Youth on Youth	4	7	4
Assaults-Youth on Staff	8	6	5
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	4	4	6
Gang related	1	3	1
Part. Major Disruption	2	0	0

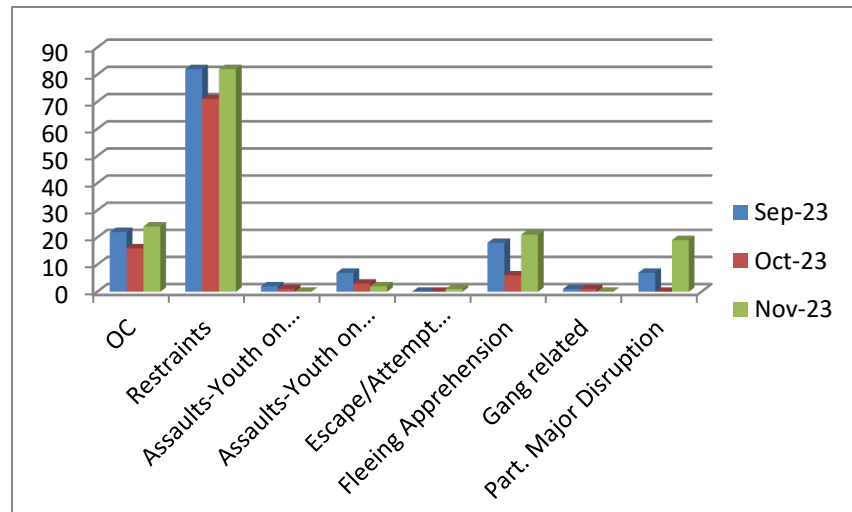
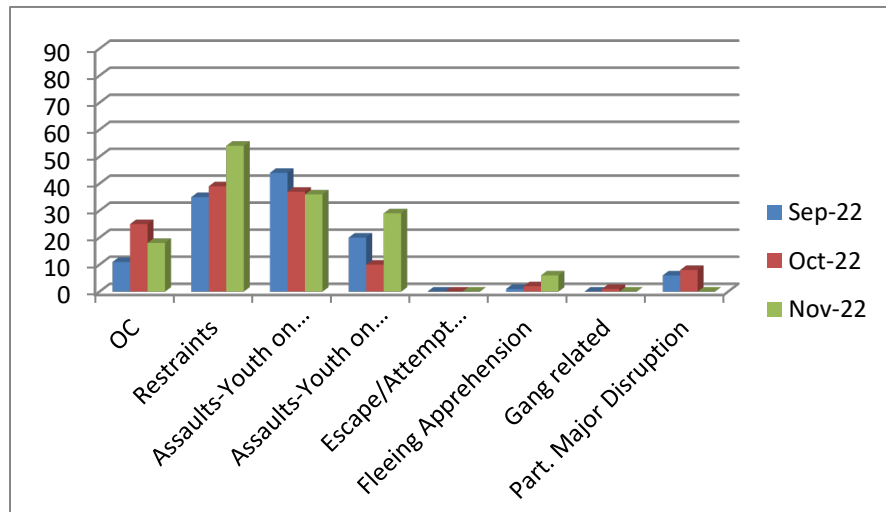
	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC	4	14	14
Restraints	9	29	32
Assaults-Youth on Youth	2	1	1
Assaults-Youth on Staff	2	0	2
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	1
Fleeing Apprehension	3	3	9
Gang related	4	5	3
Part. Major Disruption	0	9	8



McLennan County SJCF

	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22
OC	11	25	18
Restraints	35	39	54
Assaults-Youth on Youth	44	37	36
Assaults-Youth on Staff	20	10	29
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	1	2	6
Gang related	0	1	0
Part. Major Disruption	6	8	0

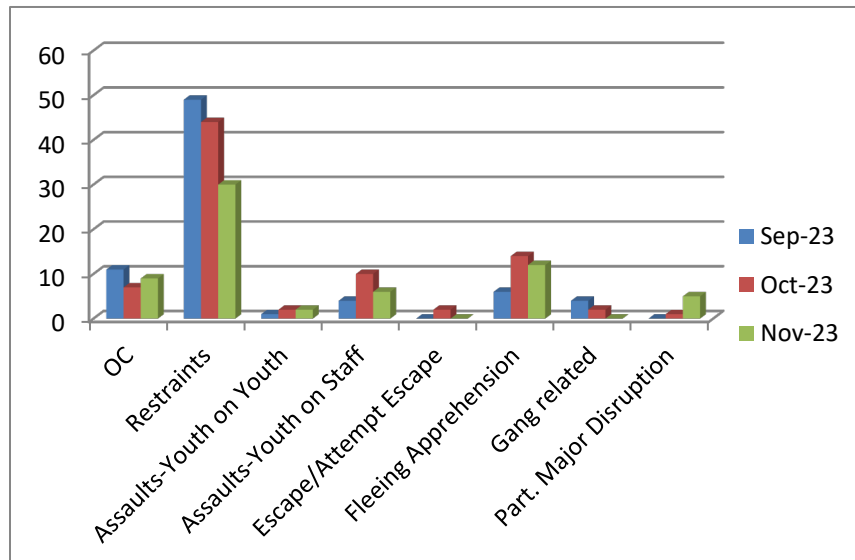
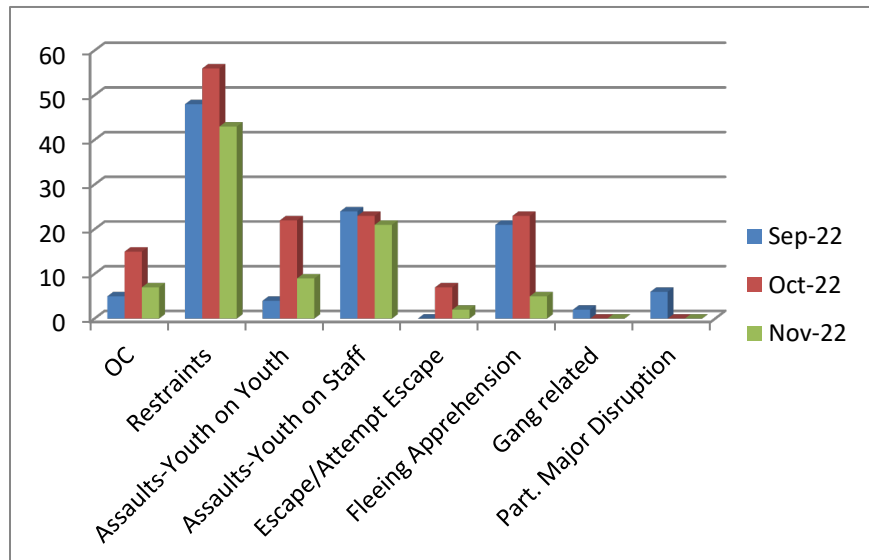
	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC	22	16	24
Restraints	82	71	82
Assaults-Youth on Youth	2	1	0
Assaults-Youth on Staff	7	3	2
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	1
Fleeing Apprehension	18	6	21
Gang related	1	1	0
Part. Major Disruption	7	0	19



Giddings Mental Health Treatment Program

	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22
OC	5	15	7
Restraints	48	56	43
Assaults-Youth on Youth	4	22	9
Assaults-Youth on Staff	24	23	21
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	7	2
Fleeing Apprehension	21	23	5
Gang related	2	0	0
Part. Major Disruption	6	0	0

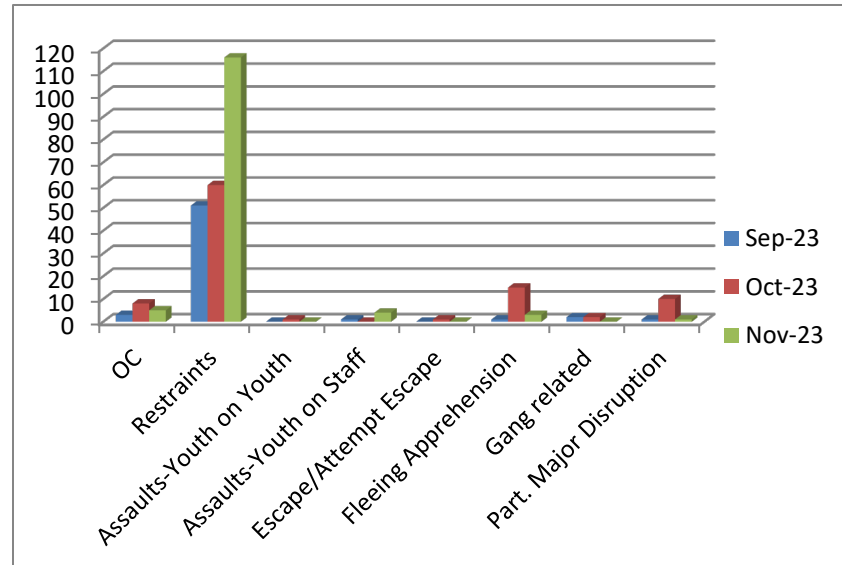
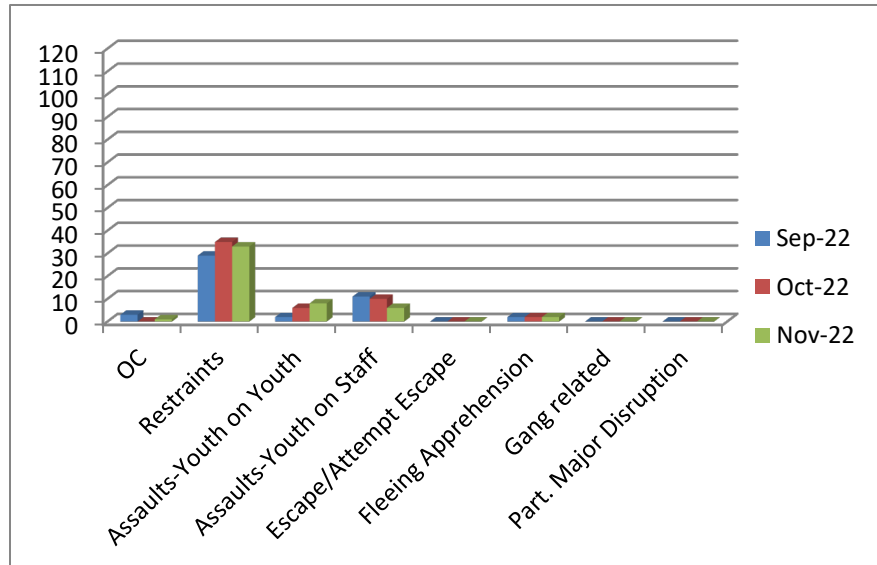
	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
OC	11	7	9
Restraints	49	44	30
Assaults-Youth on Youth	1	2	2
Assaults-Youth on Staff	4	10	6
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	2	0
Fleeing Apprehension	6	14	12
Gang related	4	2	0
Part. Major Disruption	0	1	5



Ron Jackson SJCC

	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22
OC	3	0	1
Restraints	29	35	33
Assaults-Youth on Youth	2	6	8
Assaults-Youth on Staff	11	10	6
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	2	2	2
Gang related	0	0	0
Part. Major Disruption	0	0	0

Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
3	8	5
51	60	116
0	1	0
1	0	4
0	1	0
1	15	3
2	2	0
1	10	1



Phoenix Program

The Phoenix Program is designed to protect staff and youth in TJJD state-operated facilities from highly aggressive youth. The Phoenix Program provides these aggressive youth with a highly structured environment designed to reduce their aggression and to help them progress in treatment.

	Sep-22	Oct-22	Nov-22
OC	3	0	1
Restraints	22	10	8
Assaults-Youth on Youth	7	4	4
Assaults-Youth on Staff	21	12	8
Escape/Attempt Escape	0	0	0
Fleeing Apprehension	0	3	0
Gang related	0	0	0
Part. Major Disruption	4	4	0

Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23
12	12	14
79	91	104
3	1	7
4	8	14
0	0	0
0	0	10
0	2	0
0	0	0

The OIO is in a unique position to observe trends and patterns from an objective position within the secure facilities in the course of site visits, records review, staff and youth interviews along with the review of complaints and grievances. The OIO remains concerned by high staff turnover rates and staff shortages, which lead to staff fatigue and ultimately decreased supervision of youth offenders within the State secure facilities.

The OIO will be returning to normal operations largely due in part to restorative funding provided by the 88th Legislature. Critical funding measures will provide much needed infrastructure, travel funding, replacement vehicles and salary funds. The OIO continues to leverage technology resources implemented at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase both the visible presence as well increase the opportunity for expanded contact with the youth offenders. These technology resources are intended to further compliment the physical site visits.

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For the Texas Juvenile Justice Department
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ANNEX

TJJD site visits conducted by IO staff during the first quarter

Secure Facilities

Evins Regional Juvenile Center-*Edinburg TX*

Gainesville State School-*Gainesville TX*

Giddings State School-*Giddings TX*

McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility-*Mart TX*

Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex -*Brownwood TX*

TJJD Halfway Houses

Ayres House-*San Antonio TX*

Edna Tamayo House-*Harlingen TX*

Karyn's House-*Willis TX*

Schaeffer House-*El Paso TX*

Contract Care Facilities

Pegasus School RTC-*Lockhart TX*

Rite of Passage, Inc-*Brownwood TX*

Parole

Region Central

Region East

Region North

County post-adjudicated facility site visits conducted by IO staff during the first quarter

County Operated

Amador R Rodriguez Boot Camp & Educational Center-*San Benito TX (Cameron County)*
Bell County Juvenile Services Center-*Killeen TX*
Bill Logue Juvenile Justice Center-*Waco TX*
Brazoria County Residential Treatment Facility-*Angleton TX*
Cyndi Taylor Krier Juvenile Correctional Treatment-*San Antonio TX (Bexar County)*
Dallas County Youth Village-*Dallas TX*
Dallas County-HOPE-*Dallas TX*
Dallas County Residential Drug Treatment-*Dallas TX*
Dallas County-STARS-*Dallas TX*
Denton County Secure Correctional Facility-*Denton TX*
Fort Bend County Juvenile Leadership Academy-*Katy TX*
Grayson County Post-Adjudication Facility-*Denison TX*
HOPE Academy-*Tyler TX*
Harris County Leadership Academy-*Katy TX*
Harris County Youth Village-*Houston TX*
Hays County Juvenile Post Detention Center-*San Marcos TX*
Jerry J. Esmond Juvenile Justice Center-*Dickinson TX (Galveston County)*
John R. Roach Juvenile Detention Center-*McKinney TX*
Judge Mario E. Ramirez Jr. Juvenile Justice Center-*Weslaco TX (Hidalgo County)*
Letot Residential Treatment Center-*Dallas TX*
Lubbock County Juvenile Justice Center-*Lubbock TX*
Lyle B Medlock Treatment Facility-*Dallas TX*
Marzelle Hill Transition Center-*Dallas TX*
Meurer Intermediate Sanctions Center & Halfway House-*Austin TX (Travis County)*
Samuel F. Santana Challenge Program-*El Paso*
The Youth Center of the High Plains-*Amarillo TX (Randall County)*
Van Zandt County Youth Multi-Service Center-*Grand Saline TX*
Victoria Regional Juvenile Justice Facility-*Victoria TX*
Williamson County C.O.R.E. Program-*Georgetown TX*
Willoughby Juvenile Services-*Marshall TX (Harrison County)*

Contract Care Facilities for Post Adjudicated

Arms of Hope-*Medina TX*
Athletes for Change-*Glenn Heights TX*
Austin State Hospital-*Austin TX*
Azleway Drug Treatment Program-*Big Sandy TX*
Bridge Emergency Shelter-*San Antonio TX*
Brookhaven Youth Ranch-*West TX*
Cal Farley's Boys Ranch-*Amarillo TX*
Center for Success and Independence-*Houston TX*
Center for Success and Independence-*Rockdale TX*
Cherokee Home for Children-*Cherokee TX*
Concho Valley Home for Girls-*San Angelo TX*
Everyday Life RTC-*Bryan TX*
Foster's Home-*Stephenville TX*
Garza County RJC-*Post TX*
Gulf Coast Trades Center-*New Waverly TX*
High Plains Children's Home-*Amarillo TX*
Laurel Ridge Treatment Center-*San Antonio TX*
Meadowland-Roy Maas Youth Alternatives-*Boerne TX*
Mesquite Treatment Center-*Lyford TX*
Methodist Home-*Waco TX*

MHMR Tarrant County-*Fort Worth TX*
Monarch Academy for Girls-*Denison TX*
New Horizons-*Abilene TX*
New Horizons-*Goldthwaite TX*
New Life Children's Home-*Canyon Lake TX*
North Texas State Hospital-*Vernon TX*
North Texas State Hospital-*Wichita Falls TX*
Odyssey House-*Houston TX*
Pathways Wilderness Program-*Mountain Home TX*
Reed Adolescent Center-*Plainview TX*
Rite of Passage, Inc-*Granbury TX*
San Marcos Treatment Center-*San Marcos TX*
SAFE Children's Shelter-*Austin TX*
San Marcos Treatment Center-*San Marcos TX*
SCAN Youth Recovery Home-*Laredo TX*
SCAN Youth Recovery Home-*San Benito TX*
Sundown Ranch-*Canton TX*
Terrell State Hospital-*Terrell TX*
West Texas Boys Ranch-*San Angelo TX*
Woodward Youth Academy-*Woodward IA*