



Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Governor Tony Evers | Secretary Kevin A. Carr

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 26, 2021

DOC Communications, 608-240-5060

DOCMedia@wisconsin.gov

Monitor's Report Highlights Positive Trends at Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake

DOC Still in Compliance with All Aspects of Court Order

(IRMA, Wis.) – The court-appointed Monitor's latest report on conditions at Lincoln Hills School/Copper Lake School (LHS/CLS) again finds the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) in partial or substantial compliance with every aspect of the consent decree stemming from a 2017 lawsuit over conditions at the schools.

[The report](#) commended DOC on a number of current and planned improvements at the juvenile facility, including:

- Hiring a Program Director to develop more structured, gender and culturally relevant programming
- Creating and implementing a daily schedule of staff-led activities
- Continued steps toward implementing Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), an evidenced-based treatment that promotes self-regulation and pro-social interpersonal skills
- All youth now living in cottages that have been remodeled with suicide-prevention design

“The data clearly shows that many trend lines are moving in the right direction and providing a safer environment for staff and youth, particularly within outcome measures reflecting fewer assaults and injury rates of staff,” the Monitor noted in the report.

The report also applauded the DOC's efforts to maintain facility operations during a global health crisis, rather than taking the easy approach of putting youth in their rooms as much as possible to promote social distancing and reduce the risk of infection.

However, this latest report noted that the ongoing pandemic is taking a toll on students and staff at the school. The school building has been closed and youth have been e-learning in their housing units since March. The Monitor notes youth are bored, and that both youth and staff are frustrated with virtual studies, leading to increased behavioral and disciplinary issues.

The Monitor cited an increase in use of physical and mechanical restraints over the reporting period. However, she noted, “This is very typical of a facility transitioning from and eliminating the use of OC (pepper spray) as staff develop new skills for de-escalation and behavior response techniques,” adding that she feels this trend is reflective of the lack of meaningful education and other programs as a result of the operational changes occurring as a result of the pandemic.

“Progress is not linear. Not every report will be better than the last,” said Wisconsin Department of Corrections Secretary Kevin Carr. “This administration has made tremendous progress at Lincoln Hills School/Copper Lake School the past two years. This report suggests we may have regressed in some areas and we will work to address that.”

One area where the current administration has made significant strides is eliminating use of OC (pepper spray), which has not been used at the schools in well over a year. DOC has also significantly reduced administrative confinement times for youth, invested millions in facility upgrades that improve youth safety, and enhanced arts programming with the addition of a music therapy program in 2020.

#####