



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

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Latest Monitor's Report Notes Continued Progress

Madison, Wis. - The latest report from the court-appointed Monitor for Lincoln Hills School/Copper Lake School (LHS/CLS) was filed Wednesday. The 12th Report from the Monitor notes progress made by the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) in reaching "Substantial Compliance" with more aspects of a consent decree, which stems from a 2017 lawsuit and investigation into substandard conditions at the facility under the previous administration.

The Monitor's latest visit came January 13-14, and included interviews with 39 youth and 27 staff members at LHS/CLS. The interviews revealed a continuing overall positive atmosphere at the schools, and positive body language and tone among both staff and youth.

"The youth-staff relationship in general seems positive and youth told the Monitor on many occasions that they liked the staff," the report states.

This 12th Report detailed several physical improvements to the facilities, including the renovation of an unused living unit into a recreation space that includes a variety of games and a kitchen where youth can cook/bake. According to the Monitor, "The Unit looks amazing ... Staff and youth are enjoying the space."

Other facility improvement work noted in the report includes:

- Continued work on a lighting project that will significantly improve the atmosphere in living units
- Replacing boilers in some living units
- Adding more than 100 fixed cameras around the facility to improve safety
- Purchasing additional software and hardware for the school's Music Arts Initiative
- Upgrading electrical in the welding shop, paving the way for use of newer equipment

"The Defendants should be commended for their continuing commitment to improve the physical plant which improves the daily lives for staff and youth," the Monitor wrote in the report.

Gov. Tony Evers recently expressed similar sentiments to LHS/CLS staff, in-person. The Governor visited the schools the week before the Monitor's visit. He toured the facility, met with some of the youth there and thanked staff members for their hard work.

About the latest Monitor's Report, DOC Sec. Kevin Carr said, "I am extremely proud of the work being done by leadership at the schools and in our Division of Juvenile Corrections to update LHS/CLS, and also to improve

working conditions for our staff and outcomes for youth in our care. We thank the Monitor for noting the positives steps our agency has taken and for pointing out areas for further improvement.”

Those recommendations for improvement include expanding popular programs like music, art and recreation, particularly on weekends. In this report, the Monitor acknowledged the expansion of the welding program to weekends and a decrease in the amount of time designated as weekend leisure activity for youth. However, she called for an even greater increase in structured programming on weekends, when youth have more idle time.

The Monitor heard no complaints from youth during the last visit, in the Fall. This time, the Monitor did hear concerns from some youth, including complaints about food and lack of consistency in rules.

“Youth had good things to say as well such as feeling safe, having some good staff that engage with them, (and) liking the recreation unit and music program,” the report stated.

Other items of note in the report:

- Recruiting should be a priority, but staffing levels remain adequate for the reduced population at the facility
- Decreasing physical and mechanical restraint of youth during this data cycle
- Decreasing use of “self-requested” room confinement among youth

“I credit our staff with being flexible as we have adjusted to new behavior response and de-escalation techniques, and implemented a new behavior management system,” said LHS/CLS Superintendent Klint Trevino. “Thanks to their hard work, we have made major strides in a relatively short amount of time, and are now in a place where we can continue to make smaller adjustments, fine tune, and keep improving our processes.”