2014 Monitoring Report for IYC-Pere Marquette

In December 2014, the John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA) visited Illinois Youth Center (IYC)-Pere Marquette (Pere Marquette), a minimum-security step-down facility for male youth, located in southern Illinois, about an hour outside of St. Louis. This report was reviewed with Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) in July 2015.

**Vital Statistics:**
- Population: 32
- Average Age: 16.65
- Median length of stay: 161.36 days
- Average Annual cost per youth: $133,489
- Population by Race: 56% Black, 38% White, and 6% Hispanic
- Committing Offense: 31% Class 1, 47% Class 2, 6% Class 3, and 9% Class 4 felonies, and 6% Class A Misdemeanors

(Source: IDJJ December 2014)

**Key Observations:**

- There is a growing consensus that youth incarceration should be reserved for the most serious offenses and highest risk youth, calling into question using state prisons to house misdemeanants or those youth who do not need intensive interventions, who would be more likely to benefit from receiving rehabilitative services in their homes or communities.
- Ability to hire and retain qualified staff remains a serious barrier to successful provision of services in most Illinois juvenile prisons; for example, at the time of the December 2014 JHA visit, Pere Marquette still had only one full-time mental health professional and after 2015 retirements operated with only one teacher for four months. JHA urges revision to state hiring practices to ensure that facilities are safe and youth are consistently provided with educational and rehabilitative services.
- Early Aftercare involvement and post release planning still needed improvement.
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) were being used well at this facility.
- As detailed in previous JHA reports on Pere Marquette, the facility has ongoing physical challenges. Lack of indoor physical recreation space at this facility limits opportunity for youth activity during inclement weather. Further, area flooding of the Mississippi River occasionally requires youth to be relocated, as in June 2015,
when Pere Marquette youth were temporarily housed for two weeks at Alton Mental Health Center.

- Overall Pere Marquette still needs additional resources to be a fully-achieved step-down facility.

**Executive Summary**

Pere Marquette is the only “step-down” facility for youth in Illinois. It is described by the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) as: *totally dedicated to helping youth develop skills necessary to successfully reintegrate back into the community. Youth transition to Pere Marquette from other facilities approximately 90 days before release and benefit from more intense treatment-oriented programming and community-based learning opportunities, which provide a structured environment to help develop independent living skills and positive social skills.*

1 Pere Marquette’s goals are consistent with the Agency’s rehabilitative mission for youth.

Facility administrators reported that as juvenile courts are more frequently utilizing sanctions other than state custody for low-level offenses, a trend JHA supports, it has become increasingly difficult to find youth in IDJJ facilities that meet the eligibility requirements for placement at Pere Marquette, a fenceless facility. Currently Pere Marquette is not really used as a step-down facility for youth with more serious offenses who have earned their way into the less restrictive program, as it one day might be.

JHA continues to urge Illinois to adopt reforms seen in other states, such as banning use of incarceration for juvenile misdemeanors or status offenses, and reserving juvenile incarceration for serious offenders. With these changes, Pere Marquette could be used as an earned step-down honors placement.

Concurrently with right-sizing juvenile incarceration in Illinois, IDJJ must reconsider facility placement eligibility based on the individual needs of youth and the current

1 IDJJ 2014 Annual Report, p. 33, available at, [http://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/2014_12_01_DJJAnnual%20Report_Final%284%29.pdf](http://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/2014_12_01_DJJAnnual%20Report_Final%284%29.pdf). As of JHA’s December 2014 visit, the median length of stay at Pere Marquette was north of five months (approximately 161 days), more than the three month, 90-day pre-release step-down design.

2 This report is based on a monitoring visit on December 11, 2014, as well as ongoing communications. IDJJ officials and Pere Marquette administrators reviewed and fact-checked a draft of this report and it was last discussed with JHA in July 2015. No factual substantive changes have been made since that time prior to publication. All statements of opinions and policy recommendations herein are JHA’s unless otherwise stated. See JHA’s 2013 publication *How JHA’s Prison Monitoring Works*, available at [www.thejha.org/method](http://www.thejha.org/method). Youth may send privileged mail to JHA (meaning that youth can mark the envelope “Privileged” and seal it, so that the correspondence should not be read by IDJJ staff) at: P.O. Box 10042, Chicago, IL 60610-0042. Other concerned parties may also reach us by email or phone. See prior JHA reports on this and other facilities at [www.thejha.org](http://www.thejha.org).

ability of the particular facility to meet those needs. JHA again notes that staffing levels at facilities should be a consideration in youth’s placement as they are key to a facility’s ability to meet a youth’s needs.

Pere Marquette staff expressed confidence that their facility programming can be useful to all youth in state custody, and noted the major difference would be in the longer amount of time youth with more serious offense histories should spend at Pere Marquette to reap the benefits. JHA concurs that Pere Marquette’s relatively non-institutional setting and reasonably small population facilitates a programming-oriented environment well-suited to address the needs of individual youth.

Administrators reported that youth housed at Pere Marquette are able to establish a connection with staff, in large part due to the small size of the population housed at this facility, which has a maximum capacity of 40. Youth interviewed shared the sentiment that staff are more like mentors than guards and were generally positive as to staff’s investment in their rehabilitation.4 JHA believes that as low-level juvenile offenders continue to be diverted by courts to community-based treatment and support, for youth committed to IDJJ for serious offenses and who present acute clinical needs, smaller youth facilities with low youth-to-staff ratios present a proven more rehabilitative option.5

Maintaining appropriate staffing levels and programming is an important and challenging aspect for even small facilities. More rural location as well as uncertainty in departmental direction may play a part in staff leaving facilities or difficulty in attracting recruits. As detailed in prior reports, Pere Marquette’s location and lack of indoor recreational space pose real challenges to providing an ideal step-down, community-re-integrative/skill-building setting.6 Administrators also identified numerous physical plant needs at the facility estimated at about $1.3 million, the largest of which was an estimate of $450,000 for asbestos removal in the school. IDJJ and Illinois must appropriately invest in the safety of facilities.

Staffing difficulties cripple provision of services and hamper compliance with court ordered improvements. At the time of JHA’s visit, Pere Marquette administrators noted that security staff shortages had an adverse impact upon the facility’s capacity to take youth into the local community for outings, as well as other facets of Pere Marquette’s day to day operations.7 Administrators observed that Pere Marquette, like other youth

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4 It is notable that Pere Marquette representatives won IDJJ’s top honors for 2015 Juvenile Justice Supervisor and Volunteer of the Year for their contributions to the department and youth. See press releases available at https://www.illinois.gov/idoc/news/2015/Pages/IDOCIDJJFallenHeroes.aspx and https://www.illinois.gov/idoc/news/2015/Pages/2015VolunteersoftheYear.aspx.


6 See e.g. JHA’s 2013 Pere Marquette report, available at www.thejha.org/peremaquette.

7 At the time of the December 2014 visit, Pere Marquette operated with six security staff assigned to each day and evening shift and five to night shift. Non-security reported staff vacancies and dates the positions were vacant as of December 2014 were as follows: Psychologist Administrator (4/22/14); Corrections
facilities, had lost several staff to IDJJ Aftercare. They also noted that counselor levels as well as mental health staff levels still did not meet consent decree target ratios. At the time of the JHA 2014 visit, the facility had just one mental health professional who was also charged with substance abuse treatment programming provision. Educator vacancies and delays in filling positions meant that Pere Marquette operated with just one of six teachers for four months in 2015.

Further, despite a quarter of the youth at the facility having a high school diploma or GED, the facility continues to lack onsite educational programming for these youth and very limited offsite opportunity. The slow and complicated “grading process” used by the independent state agency, Central Management Services (CMS), which is charged with hiring most of IDJJ’s staff, was cited as being a primary cause of hiring delays and hence staff vacancies.

### Findings and Recommendations

**Finding: Pere Marquette needs additional educational resources.**

Youth in IDJJ custody vary in literacy levels, level of education achieved prior to incarceration, cognitive ability, and the duration of a youth’s stay in a facility, all of which make it difficult to create a classroom environment conducive to learning. Youths’ educational experience in the facility is a mix of traditional classroom book-based learning, computer-based instruction, peer tutoring, and personal instruction from educational staff. To be able to meet the educational needs of youth in custody, staff must assess each individual’s aptitude and obtain past educational records, which often take several months. Depending on a youth’s length of stay at the facility, previous school records may not be available to the facility to help develop realistic educational goals for the youth. The high level of variation in educational need and achievement underscores the importance of maintaining proper education staffing levels in youth facilities.

At the time of JHA’s December 2014 monitoring visit, three teacher positions were filled; however, two of the three were expected to leave early in 2015. In March of 2015, IDJJ confirmed that only one teaching position was staffed and stated that five teaching positions have been authorized and posted. In additional there were postings for a principal and library associate. IDJJ administrators hoped to have these positions filled soon. Administrators reported that the subjects of Vocational Instruction, Physical Supply Supervisor (10/1/14); Educator (1/21/14); Corrections Food Service Supervisor (2/14/14); Psychologist (9/1/13); and Social Worker (10/10/14).

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9 Hiring of state employees in Illinois is a long and complicated process that involves multiple bureaucracies. This process has been cited by numerous IDJJ administrators and staff as being a major hurdle in the agency’s way of maintaining proper staffing levels.
Education, Visual Arts, and Musical Arts were not being taught due to staffing vacancies.\textsuperscript{10}

At the time of JHA’s December 2014 monitoring visit, Pere Marquette had two teachers who provided elementary and secondary education instruction, and one of two authorized special education teachers for 25 of 50 authorized hours a week. The special education youth to special education teacher ratio is 10:1, well short of the 6:1 target ratio mandated by litigation.\textsuperscript{11} From June to December 2014, nine youth at Pere Marquette were identified as needing and received Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).\textsuperscript{12}

The creation and implementation of a viable academic plan tailored to the needs of each youth is complicated, as it is uncertain how long youth will be at the facility and the facility has struggled to maintain staffing levels. To staff’s credit, several youth remarked to JHA that staff were responsive to their requests for assistance and they were generally positive as to the education programming provided at the facility. However, some youth voiced a need for more attention from staff.

All youth who had not yet earned a GED or high school diploma were in school for five school hours a day Monday through Friday. Of the five hours spent in the classroom, two of the five hours were designated as study time, during which youth are free to work on assignments, seek assistance from teachers or other youth, talk amongst themselves, or rest. Fifteen youth earned high school diplomas from December 2013 to December 2014 and eight youth received 8th grade diplomas during this time. At the time of the visit, eight youth graduates (25% of Pere Marquette’s population) were not enrolled in school.

Pere Marquette was unable to provide GED testing at the facility when JHA visited due to issues stemming from technological capacity for computerized testing installation and maintenance. There were no GEDs awarded at the facility in the year prior to the visit.

As mentioned above, there were no post-secondary or vocational offerings available to the eight youth who had completed high school or had attained a GED (one quarter of the facility’s population), at the time of JHA’s visit.\textsuperscript{13} It is critical that IDJJ meet this need, as incarcerated individuals that receive vocational training and post-secondary education

\textsuperscript{10} Education and programming vacancies as of December 2014: Physical Education-1, Special Education-1, and Vocational-1 (this position has been vacant in excess of 10 years).

\textsuperscript{11} The proposed remedial plan in the ongoing litigation calls for a five hour school day, educational services for all youth, and student-teacher ratios of 10:1 for general education and 6:1 for youth requiring more individualized attention. See ACLU Plan advanced to Improve conditions in Illinois’ juvenile justice facilities (March 17, 2014), available at \url{http://www.aclu-il.org/plan-advanced-to-improve-conditions-in-illinois-juvenile-justice-facilities/}.

\textsuperscript{12} The IEP is an individualized education plan for students with disabilities. For more information on IEPs, see U.S. Department of Education’s, A Guide to the Individualized Education Program, at \url{http://www2.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html}.

\textsuperscript{13} Data from the facility reflected that at the time of the visit, there were nine youth who were 18, while the rest were younger and none were older.
while in custody are more likely to successfully reintegrate back into the community. Administrators noted that youth that have completed high school or GED are counseled as to college entrance requirements and financial aid, and staff will assist youth in filling out Federal Application Free Student Aid (FAFSA) forms.

Rather than participate in educational programming, youth not required to be in school partake in work assignments at the facility, including painter, dietary (cooks, dishwashers, etc.), grounds (landscaping), and porter (custodial & clerical work). All youth at Pere Marquette have a work assignment, but the youth who are not required to be in school are placed in work assignments that need be performed while school is in session. IDJJ does not issue any sort of work certificate for youth with assignments at facilities but stated this was being examined. Currently they report that work is noted in case files that accompany youth on Aftercare and that youth have been encouraged to list skills gained through work assignments on applications.

Youth with fuller work schedules are granted extra privileges, such as access to video games, if the youth’s behavior warrants it. This seems like a thoughtful approach and one that is line with the Department’s move to PBIS. While JHA applauds this reward system for deserving youth, the importance of making post-secondary education and vocational offerings available to youth cannot be overstated. The implementation of post-secondary education and vocational programs should be a priority of IDJJ, both for the long term benefits that education and job training provide youth and because it gives them productive activity while in state custody as opposed to unprogrammed time that provides no benefit and is often the reason cited for behavioral deterioration.

A positive programming step for Pere Marquette this year is their collaboration with Lewis & Clark Community College, which allows youth to participate in the college’s YouthBuild program. At the time of JHA’s visit, two youth were participating in the YouthBuild Highway Construction Careers Training Program. This program will enable youth to begin vocational training that can be continued upon release. The program offers GED programming and construction classes. At the end of the program there is an

14 The RAND Corporation, a nonprofit institution that aims to improve policy and decision making through research and analysis, has done recent research that has found incarcerated individuals who receive general education and vocational training are 43% less likely to return to prison after their release than those who do not. Furthermore, they found that a $1 investment in education and vocational programs while incarcerated can reduce incarceration costs by $4 to $5 during the first three years of post release. Lois M. David, Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, Jessica Saunders & Jeremy N.V. Miles, *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education*, RAND Corporation sponsored by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2013), available at [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.pdf).

15 Youth are paid a wage for these assignments, ranging from $0.48 cents to $0.77 cents per hour, with a cap of $75 each youth may earn per month.

16 PBIS, discussed further below, aims to “catch youth being good” and reward them, instead of routinely doling out negative consequences for poor behavior.

17 For more about the YouthBuild program, visit [www.youthbuild.org](http://www.youthbuild.org).

18 “Lewis and Clark’s Highway Construction Careers Training Program offers minorities, women and disadvantaged students a pathway to a new career in just 16 weeks of intensive training.” More information is available at [http://www.lc.edu/Youthbuild/](http://www.lc.edu/Youthbuild/).
opportunity for youth to receive a GED as well as construction and safety industry recognized certificates. The youth have an opportunity to earn up to $75 a week and when they have completed their community service hours, they will be eligible for a $1,400 scholarship for continuing education. As of July 2015, Pere Marquette administrators reported additional youth continue to enroll and have success with this program, including several youth obtaining vocational certificates and three youth obtaining their GEDs in the pass months.

**Recommendation:** Like all IDJJ facilities, Pere Marquette must ensure adequate educational staff, and prioritize establishing programming for post-secondary education and vocational training to give youth the best chance of success upon release, as well as to provide youth with productive, rehabilitative programming while incarcerated.

**Finding:** All youth at Pere Marquette participate in substance abuse treatment and receive mental health counseling; however, the facility had vacancies for several mental health positions.

All youth at Pere Marquette participate in therapeutic programming, which is provided by staff from the Wells Center and includes substance abuse treatment. Contractor Wells Center’s staff person was still the only full time dedicated mental health professional at the facility at the time of JHA’s 2014 visit. Since the visit, mental health staffing has improved.

At the time of JHA’s visit, only one mental health professional was available for 40 hours per week to provide care to all youth in addition to providing Wells Center programming. The facility had 10 hours monthly of onsite psychiatry. The authorized psychologist position had been vacant since September 2013 and was posted. The facility had not had a Treatment Unit Administrator since April 2014, but this position was filled after JHA’s visit, in February 2015. The social worker position had been vacant since October 2014 and was recently filled June 16, 2015.

Wells Center uses the Forward Thinking curriculum from the Change Companies, which includes sections on: Responsible Behavior, What Got Me Here, Victim Impact, Relationships and Communications, Handling Difficult Feelings, Re-entry Planning and Family Relationships. Groups are offered to 10 youth at a time and depend somewhat on the current population. Additional specialized modules include Substance Abuse Treatment (a group-based 90-day program), Anger Management, Team Building, SPARCS (Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress), Thinking Errors, and Parenting. Administrators reported that six youth had children.

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19 Several youth commented that they had been through multiple prior substance abuse treatment programs while on probation or during other incarceration, in some cases for very minor drug offenses.
20 According to the Change Companies, Forward Thinking is a “cognitive-behavioral series uses evidence-based strategies to assist youth involved in the criminal justice system in making positive changes to their thoughts, feelings and behaviors.” More information is available at http://www.changecompanies.net/products/series.php?id=6.
At the time of the visit, approximately 78% of Pere Marquette’s population (27 youth) were assigned as mental health Level 1 or were considered to have minimum mental health needs, with no youth assigned a higher level of need. Fourteen youth (approximately 44% of Pere Marquette’s population) were receiving psychotropic medication and being treated by a psychiatrist, who was at the facility 10 hours a month and typically sees youth monthly for 45 minutes for a new patient, or 30 minutes for a follow-up. Youth reportedly received 45 minutes of individual therapy a week based on treatment need.

Recommendation: Additional mental health staff positions must be filled to aid with necessary programming for youth including in addition to youth treatment, reentry planning and family counseling.

Finding: Pere Marquette is one of two Illinois youth facilities included in the Treatment Readiness and Induction Program (TRIP) from Texas Christian University (TCU).

The Treatment Readiness and Induction Program (TRIP) is a voluntary research study for youth with level one or two substance abuse issues, which focuses on the relationship between motivation and readiness for substance abuse treatment and program retention. TRIP is made up of eight modules, intended to be introduced to youth in their first 30 days of drug treatment. The four primary facets of the TRIP intervention are Mapping-Enhanced Counseling Strategies, Motivation & Cognitive Enhancements, the Downward Spiral Game, and Peer Facilitation.

Ten cycles of TRIP had been completed at the time of the JHA visit, and data resulting from the study is being evaluated by TCU to gauge the effectiveness of the program. Staff stated that six of the eight TRIP modules were well-received by youth and added that IDJJ administrators are planning to apply a modified version of TRIP department-wide. As of March 2015, IDJJ reported that TCU has not provided any of the preliminary findings relating to their youth populations yet. JHA recommends that any findings be shared and used to improve substance abuse treatment provision within IDJJ.

Pere Marquette’s administration stated that the facility is currently employing a hybrid of TRIP modules and Forward Thinking curriculum, titled Building Blocks, based on staff and administrator’s findings as to which elements of these programs has been most impactful for the facility’s population. Administrators also noted that programming is consistently measured for effectiveness and that adjustments are made as needed, so that it best fits the youth that the facility serves. It is unclear whether changes to the modules of the TRIP program made by the facility, in conjunction with IDJJ executive staff, have been done in conjunction with TCU, and what impact these changes might have on the program and the study.

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21 Information regarding Texas Christian University’s “Treatment Readiness and Induction Program (TRIP)” is available at http://ibr.tcu.edu/manuals/treatment-readiness-and-induction-program-trip/.
Recommendation: While JHA understands the goal of making the program more worthwhile and engaging to youth, staff should remain mindful that alterations of a pilot program can lead to inconclusive or less useful data, which may in turn negatively impact the usefulness of the study and understanding of how best to use or change the program for future use.

Finding: Pere Marquette’s utilization of PBIS\(^22\) seemed to be motivating youth and earning staff buy in.

Pere Marquette uses a level system to grant greater privileges to youth. This system is labeled Gold, A, B, C, and levels are earned based on accumulated points. Privileges earned through the level system can include increased recreation or off grounds activities. JHA was pleased to speak with several Gold Level youth in December 2014.\(^23\) Other incentives are also used at Pere Marquette to encourage positive behavior. Administrators stated that any youth, regardless of their level, were allowed to have a made-to-order breakfast if the youth had been discipline free during the prior week. The facility also recognizes a “Youth of the Month,” determined by quantifiable data as to what the youth had achieved in a month (school assignments completed, volunteer hours, etc).

Youth are also issued “Pere Bucks” when they are “caught being good.” Youth receive Pere Bucks during the day from programming and security staff for positive behavior, and these can be used to purchase desired items from the PBIS store, such as school supplies and hygiene products. There seems to be a benefit in moving away from an incentive system where points are tallied by day or week, because now a bad moment at one time in a single day will not negate a youth’s opportunity to have tangible rewards and reinforcement for later good behavior.

Administration reported that although the completion of the PBIS store had been delayed, staff had donated items youth could get as rewards. JHA applauds staff support and effort to make sure there are rewards available for youth to make earning Pere Bucks worthwhile. This kind of investment in youth by staff is admirable. Again, a benefit of having a smaller facility is that it can take less time to ensure that all staff are trained and on board with new initiatives.

While the incentives provided to youth appear to be effective in encouraging positive behavior, it should be noted that many youth at Pere Marquette stated that “cut time,” or having the date a youth is presented for a possible release decision advanced, was their primary motivation for participating in programming and refraining from behaviors that may result in a disciplinary ticket.


\(^23\) A youth must be at Pere Marquette a minimum of four weeks in order to qualify for Gold Level, at which youth are afforded more privileges, such as receiving higher quality bedding, the option of being single-celled, etc.
**Recommendation:** Positive incentive program rewards should be better supported by IDJJ, as funds have been made available from the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission for PBIS and should be used to provide more items to the Pere Marquette PBIS store so there is less responsibility on staff to fill it.

**Finding:** Post release planning does not routinely begin for youth upon entrance to IDJJ, and the goal of early Aftercare involvement has yet to be realized.

At the time of JHA’s visit, most of the youth (18) were assigned to IDJJ Aftercare Specialists and one youth was assigned to the Parole Division of the IDOC. As of March 2015, IDJJ reported that all youth with IDJJ post-release supervision, except for juvenile sex offenders, are on the Aftercare caseload. Aftercare Specialists are responsible for preparing, implementing, and monitoring individualized post release plans for youth in state custody. Aftercare Specialists are to begin planning for and facilitating a youth’s structured reentry back into the community immediately following a youth’s arrival at an IDJJ youth center, not just upon release. This entails working with IDJJ facility staff, community service providers, and youth’s family to establish a continuity of services and programs from an IDJJ facility and the community in which a youth lives. The plan should be based on the clinical and other needs of individual youth. It should address the youth’s post release housing, programming, and education needs.

While Aftercare has been an initiative of IDJJ for several years, it is only in the past year that Aftercare was rolled out statewide. Several administrators and staff throughout IDJJ have remarked to JHA that there are still kinks to work out. Nonetheless, Pere Marquette administrators reported that Aftercare Specialists are becoming more involved with youth in the facility.

During the December 2014 visit, administration explained to JHA that youth at Pere Marquette were themselves responsible for forming a plan as to where they will live, how they will comply with mandated programming and schooling, or find lawful employment after they are released. Although JHA recognizes the importance of youth involvement in the post release planning process, youth in the custody of a correctional agency are frequently not in a position to create or execute a post release plan without support from capable adults. Among other barriers, which may include not having reached the age of majority, youth in IDJJ custody have limited access to the outside world and do not have access to the Internet. One youth interviewed by JHA said that he had not received assistance with post release planning during his stay at Pere Marquette, but added that staff did advocate for youth at their parole hearings. Since the visit, administrators reported that Aftercare Specialists have been active in the development and implementation of youths’ treatment plans, come to meet with youth and copy their Master Files, and attend monthly staffings, parole board, Family Day, and special events.

According to administration, a counselor at Pere Marquette would assist youth with finding placements and it was acknowledged that some youth are extremely difficult to place due to factors beyond the Department’s control. During 2014, Pere Marquette housed in total six youth who were Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
wards, with two at the facility at the time of the visit. Administrators reported that typically five to ten percent of youth at Pere Marquette do not have suitable guardians to return home to. In 2014, six youth who had been approved for release were held at the facility for months due to lack of suitable placements. The longest stay for one of these youth was seven additional months that he remained at Pere Marquette due to this regrettable circumstance. This underscores the importance of Aftercare Specialists becoming actively involved in post release planning from the beginning of a youth’s incarceration in an IDJJ facility. If identified early, barriers in the way of a youth’s transition back into the community can be addressed in a timely manner. As of March 2015, IDJJ reported the department still lacked a statewide Placement Coordinator but that they had a Resource Development Manager, who is responsible for oversight with all community placement providers and works with facility counselors and Aftercare to manage all placements.

Recommendation: Release planning requires the input and organization of an Aftercare Specialist, who gets to know the youth while he or she is in custody and works with the youth and their outside supports to maximize youth success upon release. Institutional programming and treatment must be sustained and supported by active Aftercare support and input in youth reentry that begins once a youth is in State custody.

Finding: The Illinois Prisoner Review Board (PRB) may not be the best arbiter of youth readiness for release from IDJJ custody.

Administrators reported to JHA that at the PRB hearings held at Pere Marquette in August of 2014, no youth were found eligible for release by the PRB, including youth that had exhibited exemplary behavior while at the facility and had earned positive reports from Pere Marquette administrators and staff. Administration stated that most youth handled the situation well, but some required additional attention. Youth interviewed echoed this sentiment and expressed frustration regarding the perceived fairness of the August hearings.

It is problematic when decisions made by the PRB as to whether or not a youth should be released are considered to be arbitrary by those who are most impacted by the decision. Given the indeterminate sentencing structure of Illinois juvenile courts, and that the decision for release is based on whether or not a youth is found to be rehabilitated, it may be more appropriate for release decisions to be made by those who best know the youth and can attest to the growth and change achieved by an individual while in state custody. In Missouri, for example, in 82% of cases, judges permit the custodial agency to make

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24 The PRB is a quasi-judicial body consisting of individuals appointed by the Governor of Illinois that “imposes release conditions for incarcerated individuals who are exiting penal facilities, revokes and restores good conduct credits from inmates and conducts hearings to determine whether parolees have violated conditions of parole” in addition to several other duties related to the 70,000 plus adults under the correctional supervision of the Illinois Department of Corrections. The PRB also determines if and when youth committed to the custody of IDJJ should be released from physical custody onto juvenile parole. More information available at http://www.illinois.gov/prb/Pages/default.aspx.
the release decision relying on input from the people inside the facility who have worked most closely with a youth to determine whether or not he is ready for release, basing their decision on witnessed change in behavior, treatment, understanding and maturation.25

JHA appreciates the PRB represents an objective outside body, so that one party is not contradictorily in charge of treatment and evaluation. Yet relying on other non-facility-based departmental actors as part of the decision who could oversee uniformity across agency release decisions, could similarly address this concern. In some ways, staff at a facility already control the release decision in Illinois because a youth will not be presented for release if staff do not believe the youth is ready (prior to the youth “maxing out” or serving the equivalent of the time they would serve if they were sentenced as an adult). However, there is no positive corollary where if a youth is deemed rehabilitated by staff, he will have a guarantee of success before the PRB. JHA was unable to find public information about the PRB’s responsibility to articulate and document reasons for denials to youth and facility staff, we recommend making this a requirement so that a youth has a specific goal to work towards for release, or at least be more aware of the impediments to a release decision. Further, cumulative anonymized information about release denials could provide valuable information about existing barriers to improving youth outcomes, e.g. community services required as parole conditions not being geographically accessible.

Currently not only are the decision makers for youth release in Illinois not necessarily in the best position to attest to youth rehabilitation or readiness for reentry, the process by which individuals are determined eligible for release may be considered suspect in the eyes of youth if there is a lack of articulated process and reasons, possibly undermining IDJJ’s ability to achieve its rehabilitative mission.26 While some PRB reviews may be comprehensive and articulate goals for youth in release denials, JHA will continue to investigate whether this best practice is required and consistently adhered to.

Recommendation: Given the rehabilitative mission of IDJJ and indeterminate sentencing structure used in juvenile delinquency proceedings, decisions about youth release should be made by professionals who have worked with and know youth’s change and development in custody best.

Finding: Family contact and visitation are important for youth and their families in order to improve and maintain relationships, which can assist in successful reentry.

Incarcerated youth that maintain constructive contact with family in the community tend to be more engaged with programming provided in correctional facilities and are less

likely to recidivate subsequent to release from custody. JHA applauds Pere Marquette’s recognition of the importance of family involvement with youth in terms of both reentry preparation and impact on youths’ in-facility behavior. Notably, lack of telephone contact between youth and their families was not an issue that was raised by youth housed at Pere Marquette during JHA’s visit. Shortly after a youth arrives at Pere Marquette, staff allows a call between youth and their loved ones. Throughout a youth’s stay at this facility, they are permitted one phone call a month that is facilitated by an IDJJ Youth and Family Specialist. Also, youth are granted two calls per month by their Wells Center counselor. More calls may be afforded if staff identifies a clinical need for additional youth-family contact.

“Family counseling” was also reportedly available as facilitated by counselors. However, given that the facility had only one very busy mental health professional at the time of the visit, JHA believes this was likely not mental health “counseling,” which many youth and their families could benefit from. Several youth interviewed reported conflicts at home that were clear sources of stress and difficulty for reentry planning.

Given the geographic distance between Pere Marquette and where most families of youth reside, the location of this facility is a barrier to visits between youth and their loved ones. At the time of JHA’s monitoring visit, administrators stated that approximately half of the youth in their custody receive a visit while at the facility and that only four youth were expected to have family attend for an upcoming Family Day, which is held monthly. During Family Day there is a meal, board games, family photo opportunities and a Family Forum, which is a meeting between family members and various staff to discuss opportunities for youth at the facility and reentry needs and planning. Families continue to be welcome to be part of regular youth staffing meetings by phone and to be present when a youth is presented for parole, and youth have regular visiting hours every weekend. To increase visitation opportunities, administrators reported they have been working with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) to facilitate transportation between the facility and cities of Decatur and Peoria for families. JHA supports collaboration between Illinois youth centers and community groups in order to increase family visitation with youth, which helps foster improved relations that will benefit all parties when a youth is able to return home.

Recommendation: Individual facilities should look for opportunities to collaborate with community partners to provide transportation to families of incarcerated youth and help defray the expenses of visitation. Secondly, family counseling facilitated by mental health professionals should be made available.

Finding: Lack of indoor recreation space at Pere Marquette continues to be detrimental to youth in terms of providing opportunities for positive activity and physical exercise.


28 These calls are provided by the facility free of charge to the youth. Youth are also allowed to make collect telephone calls via payphone located on the living units. The cost is about $3.50 per 10-minute call.
As detailed in prior JHA reports, Pere Marquette lacks the capacity to provide indoor physical exercise and recreation to youth. The absence of an indoor gym results in youth being unable to partake in physical recreation if outdoor exercise cannot be allowed due to inclement weather. Administrators reported that they do their best to offset this as much as possible via other recreational programming, but reiterated that indoor recreation space is a major need. Staff reported to JHA that “the kids need more to do.”

Pere Marquette partners with Principia College (Principia), located nearby in Elsah, Illinois, to provide some off grounds activities to youth. Small groups of youth travel to Principia to engage in activities such as swimming and participate in sports clinics, such as an April 2014 baseball clinic where 11 youth watched a game, took part in drills related to the fundamentals of game play, and ate pizza with the College’s baseball team.²⁹

At the time of JHA’s 2014 visit, the position of Corrections Leisure Activities Specialist was filled on a temporary basis. Administrators and youth alike reported that the person performing this function was doing a first-rate job of facilitating activities on and off grounds, such as on-site rugby and soccer clinics with players from Principia. Administration noted that this person enjoyed the work and would like to permanently remain in the position, but this had yet to be approved above the facility level. JHA encourages IDJJ to fill staff vacancies according to who will be most effective in and enthusiastic about a position, in addition to considering professional qualifications, as much as the parameters set by the collective bargaining agreement with the union that represents most IDJJ line staff (the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)) will allow.

**Recommendation:** IDJJ must find resources to provide year-round large muscle physical activity for all Pere Marquette youth.

**Finding:** The rural location of Pere Marquette limits learning opportunities and experiences that are important for reentering youth; geography should be taken into consideration in designating step-down facilities.

Also as detailed in prior JHA reports, the rural location of Pere Marquette, does not permit this youth center to fulfill its role as a true step-down facility because it struggles to provide youth with community-based experiences. Ideally IDJJ would operate step-down facilities that would provide youth with access to services available in the community of release and necessary to their future success, such as providing youth with state identification, allowing youth to gain lawful employment in the community, and reestablishing ties with family with Aftercare support while still in custody – an experience more akin to what is provided in the Illinois Department of Corrections’ (IDOC’s) Adult Transition Centers (ATCs), which provide programming to inmates while allowing for gradual, supervised reentry into the community, importantly including

aid with obtaining identification documents. A noteworthy difference is that IDOC’s step-down ATCs are located in more populated areas that make the realization of a reentry-oriented mission possible. Also half of the ATC facilities are operated by contractor Safer Foundation, which is a non-profit whose mission is to promote and facilitate successful reentry and employment for individuals with criminal records.

It is critical for youth being released from a correctional facility to possess a valid driver’s license or state identification card, as they will be required to present identification in order to enroll in mandated programming, and to apply for a job. Assisting youth in obtaining an official identification card has been a longstanding challenge for IDJJ. Frequently youth need administrative and financial assistance in order to get the necessary underlying documents (such as a birth certificate and social security card), a letter establishing residency outside of a facility, and help paying the cost of an identification card. JHA continues to advocate for IDJJ to adopt programs similar to other states, such as Ohio, that undertake the process on behalf of and pay for youth in state custody to leave facilities with state identification cards.

Although Pere Marquette still struggles to provide community re-integrative and employment opportunities to youth, it benefits from many valuable area partnerships. Youth at Pere Marquette are taken off grounds for structured extracurricular trips into the community more often than youth housed at other IDJJ facilities. For example, administrators reported to JHA that prior to our visit, select youth were taken to Principia to hear three of the astronauts that participated in the Apollo 16 mission speak. Administrators stated that although trips into the community were frequently provided, staff vacancies made it difficult to allocate the security staff required to be escorts for such outings. Youth housed at Pere Marquette were mostly positive regarding the off grounds excursions. The overall consensus amongst youth interviewed was that the off grounds trips were provided on a regular basis and that staff were fair when selecting which youth participated.

Administrators noted the valuable contributions of volunteers at the facility with programming including Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), Madison County Christian for Christ Ministries, the Monthly Birthday Program, Ancient of Days Bible Study, Lutheran Bible Study, and Creative Writing. The facility averaged about 45 hours of volunteer time a month. Nearly half of the youth reportedly partake in FCA activities, which occur twice monthly and an average of seven youth participate in weekly Creative Writing programming. Administrators reported that Muslim volunteer services were a facility need.

Administrators also reported that Call for Help of Granite City, Illinois, provides training related to the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) to staff on an annual basis. Call for Help also addresses youth twice a month in regards to PREA and the subject of sexual

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30 For more information on ATCs, see JHA’s 2014 reports on the Fox Valley ATC (female) or Crossroads ATC (male), available at [http://thejha.org/foxvalley](http://thejha.org/foxvalley) and [http://thejha.org/crossroadsatc](http://thejha.org/crossroadsatc).
31 More information about Safer Foundation available at [http://www.saferfoundation.org/about/overview](http://www.saferfoundation.org/about/overview).
32 More information regarding PREA is available at [http://www.prearesourcecenter.org](http://www.prearesourcecenter.org).
abuse. This group also serves as the facility’s official PREA advocate for youth through ICASA (Illinois Commission Against Sexual Assault). Administration commented that youth at Pere Marquette are more apt to report incidents of earlier sexual victimization that occurred prior to being placed in IDJJ custody, and attributed this to youth being able to build a strong rapport with staff and being housed in an environment that is not as institutional as other youth facilities.

Pere Marquette’s gardening program demonstrates a positive result from staff initiative. Staff hoped to expand the garden in 2015, as the demand to participate in the program in 2014 was higher than the facility could accommodate and the youth who were able to participate enjoyed the program. Capitalizing on the opportunities presented in a more rural setting is advantageous to this facility. JHA inquired as to whether any animal programs could be used at Pere Marquette as part of an educational program. Administrators expressed some concerns about logistics and possible allergies, but JHA notes that several IDOC facilities have animal programs that have been successful and positive for the facilities and inmates.

**Recommendation:** Step-down facility programming is of benefit to youth as is the small size of this facility and community engagement, these benefits should be enhanced by creating more facilities of this size and type in locations that offer more opportunity for youth engagement and life skill education.

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Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois’ juvenile and adult correctional facilities. Every year, JHA staff and trained citizen volunteers inspect prisons, jails, and detention centers throughout the state. Based on these inspections, JHA regularly issues reports that are instrumental in improving conditions and the criminal justice system.

Models for Change
Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

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