



# John Howard Association of Illinois

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## 2016 Monitoring Visits to IYC-Warrenville

Illinois Youth Center (IYC)-Warrenville (Warrenville) is the only coed facility within the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ), and the only facility housing girls, thus it includes female reception and classification. Warrenville is located about 30 miles west of Chicago.



### Vital Statistics

Population: 8 girls and 18 boys

Average Age: 16.6-girls, 16.4-boys

Population by Race: Black 37.5%-girls, 57.1%-boys; White 50%-girls, 19%-boys; Hispanic 0%-girls, 23.8%-boys; and Biracial 12.5%-girls, 0% boys.

Average Length of Stay in Months: 4-girls, 3.7-boys

Felony Offense Class-girls: Class M 12.5% (1), Class X 12.5% (1), Class 1 12.5% (1), Class 2 50% (4), Class 3 0%, and Class 4 12.5% (1).<sup>1</sup>

Felony Offense Class-boys: Class M 0%, Class X 4.8% (1), Class 1 14.3% (3), Class 2 42.9% (9), Class 3 23.8% (5), and Class 4 14.3% (3).<sup>2</sup>

*Source: IDJJ, December 2016*

## I. Executive Summary

Throughout 2016 there were numerous statewide changes to Illinois' juvenile justice system and facilities. It is helpful to view the changes at Warrenville in this context, which includes population shifts due to the decrease in the number of youth, particularly girls, in state custody and the closure of IYC-Kewanee (Kewanee). These changes ultimately resulted in there being five remaining IDJJ facilities, four male youth centers<sup>3</sup> and Warrenville, which adapted from a female to a coed facility in March 2016. The John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA) visited Warrenville in April and December of 2016. The primary concerns reported by staff at the facility related not to the coed transition, but to the ongoing lack of a state budget.

After receiving the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation grant in 2015, IDJJ announced its comprehensive strategic plan focusing on five core priorities: to right-size;

<sup>1</sup> Committing Counties-girls: Cook 0%, Collar Counties 12.5% (1), Metro-East 0%, Central 25% (2), Southern 12.5% (1), Northern 50% (4). Committing Counties-boys: Cook 42.9% (9), Collar Counties 9.5% (2), Metro-East 4.7% (1), Central 33.3% (7), Southern 0%, Northern 9.5% (2)

<sup>2</sup> Committing Counties-boys: Cook 42.9% (9), Collar Counties 9.5% (2), Metro-East 4.7% (1), Central 33.3% (7), Southern 0%, Northern 9.5% (2)

<sup>3</sup> IYCs Chicago, Harrisburg, St. Charles, and Pere Marquette.

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rehabilitate; reintegrate; respect; and report.<sup>4</sup> These changes, in conjunction with legislative reforms, led to a 44% decrease in IDJJ population over the 2016 fiscal year.<sup>5</sup> Right-sizing involved front-end, facility-based, and post-release reforms. In addition to diversion, this work involved getting low risk youth out of facilities quicker, and fewer youth being returned to custody for violations of post-custody release conditions with Aftercare, which had also been shortened, as had been recommended by JHA and others for years.<sup>6</sup>

While there was no specific gender responsive policy that aimed to reduce the number of girls in IDJJ custody, nationwide efforts to reduce gender disparities and promote gender responsive policies and practices may have inadvertently had a positive residual effect on the number of girls remanded to state custody. Simultaneously, policy changes made in 2015 and 2016 in Illinois reduced the overall youth population in state custody from more than 700 youth at the beginning of 2015, to under 450 in early 2016. Warrenville, as the IDJJ facility housing girls, saw an even more drastic proportional population decrease from highs around 40 girls to commonly housing fewer than half that number, around 15, as IDJJ and other stakeholders worked to move lower risk and need youth out of facilities and keep them in communities.<sup>7</sup> Projections suggested these numbers would continue to fall. Prior to becoming a coed facility in March 2016,<sup>8</sup> administrators noted that at one point in late 2015 they were down to housing just eight girls<sup>9</sup> due to efforts in right-sizing the juvenile incarcerated population.

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<sup>4</sup> Improving Youth Outcomes, IDJJ 2015 Operating Plan Summary, <https://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/DJJ%202015%20Strategic%20Plan%20March%2020%202015.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> IDJJ Annual Report 2016, <https://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/IDJJ%202016%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> See e.g. JHA's 2014 Warrenville Monitoring Report, <http://thejha.org/warrenville> ("Illinois needs to shorten the length of time that youth are under parole supervision, reduce the number of youth re-incarcerated for technical parole violations, and provide more placement options for youth approved for release on parole, to prevent unduly prolonging incarceration of youth in IDJJ facilities.") Administrators during JHA's April 2016 visit stated that in the year prior of 87 female admissions at the facility, more than half, 49 were still parole violators (and 11 were court evaluations). However, in 2017, administrators reported that due to reforms, the number of parole violators within the IDJJ population was down.

<sup>7</sup> Administrators at Warrenville, noted that, one identified group of youth that they will particularly try to work to get released when possible are pregnant girls so that they are not in custody when they deliver. All girls have to take a urine pregnancy test upon intake. If the test is positive, a blood pregnancy test is used to confirm. There is a testing protocol, including testing if a girl does not have her period. Girls are not given medications prior to the urine pregnancy test at intake because of possible medication impacts on fetal development. Pregnant girls are given prenatal care at the facility. Restraints are not used for transport to the hospital or during active labor. Girls' family members are allowed to attend the birth. Pregnant girls are typically taken to the hospital for a tour prior to giving birth, so they can see baby and birthing rooms, and watch a video to better know what to expect. After giving birth, girls will be taken to the hospital to see their baby daily if the baby is premature and must stay in the hospital before being released to the guardian. Administrators acknowledge the emotional intensity of this experience for the mother and also staff, and stressed the availability of mental health counseling both at the facility and on Aftercare for both girls who are pregnant and have given birth. Administrators noted that they would like to have an obstetrician/gynecologist specialist available for the girls onsite.

<sup>8</sup> Note that Warrenville has throughout its history been a coed facility and has staff who were also at the facility at that time in the 1970s. Administrators stated that at that time there were about 100 youth, with about 30 boys, whereas now there are far fewer residents in total and more male than female youth at the facility.

<sup>9</sup> Several of these remaining girls had very high needs, and Warrenville staff reported during the April 2016 JHA visit that they had five instances where a girl was hospitalized in the prior year due to extremes of self-harm or

Warrenville administrators attributed the smoothness of the transition to becoming a coed facility in part to the number of youth in IDJJ being at an all-time low, as well as their having a very high staff to youth ratio, as now required throughout IDJJ by both the *R.J.* litigation and juvenile federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards.<sup>10</sup> They stressed that the high staff to youth ratio is critical to the facility's success. Administrators also noted that a culture shift is taking place among staff in terms of focusing on treatment and rehabilitation rather than punitive measures, and stated that at larger facilities it is much harder to change institutional culture. Warrenville administrators lauded the benefits of being fully staffed and having a smaller facility, in that there is a big difference between managing a cottage, or housing unit, with just six youth, and managing one with more than 20 youth, as is the case at the larger facilities, in terms of the services and individual attention that can be offered.

In contrast to the well-staffed, small, treatment focused environment modeled at Warrenville, was the more challenging environment at Kewanee, which in early 2016, IDJJ announced plans to close.<sup>11</sup> JHA's prior reports on Kewanee, as well as the expert reports in the *R.J.* litigation,<sup>12</sup> documented the history of persistent systemic understaffing and programmatic dysfunction at that facility, which threatened the overall well-being of youth and staff. The Kewanee closure, achieved in July 2016, would have ripple effects throughout IDJJ due to the need to accommodate some higher risk and need boys who were historically housed at Kewanee in other facilities, these include male youth suffering from acute mental illness, labeled as juvenile sex offenders (JSOs), and designated maximum-security.<sup>13</sup>

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aggression. Typically, hospitalizations last two to three weeks for stabilization, with the shortest stay reported as 10 days and the longest, a month. Warrenville staff noted that there is a need for a residential treatment unit, or inpatient, setting for girls and some of these young women as they age out of the juvenile system. Staff noted that having just a few high need youth can feel like having more than a hundred youth in terms of demands on their time and resources.

<sup>10</sup> Under *R.J.* various required staff ratios were implemented; however, IDJJ facilities must now also minimally meet ratios of 8:1 youth to staff for waking hours and 16:1 for sleeping hours under PREA *R.J.* case summary and documents, <http://www.aclu-il.org/r-j-v-bishop22/>, and *PREA Juvenile Facility Standard §115.313, Supervision and monitoring*, <http://www.prearesourcecenter.org/sites/default/files/library/preafinalstandardstype-juveniles.pdf>. All IDJJ facilities were audited for compliance with PREA in August 2016, and further IDJJ PREA information and reports are available at <https://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Pages/PrisonRapeEliminationAct.aspx>. Warrenville administrators also noted related to PREA compliance that they had increased camera coverage of the facility to eliminate blind spots and continued to improve PREA education for youth and staff, including increasing LGBT resources and partnering with outside organizations.

<sup>11</sup> Statement from Candice Jones, Director, Department of Juvenile Justice on the Proposed Closing of IYC Kewanee, February 12, 2016, <https://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/Statement%20-%20Director%20Jones%20IDJJ%20KEW%2002.16.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> See [www.thejha.org/kewanee](http://www.thejha.org/kewanee) and <http://www.aclu-il.org/r-j-v-bishop/case-documents/>.

<sup>13</sup> Each of these groups had received separate housing and services at Kewanee. See [www.thejha.org/kewanee](http://www.thejha.org/kewanee). Administrators noted that the change in law which took effect January 1, 2016 terminating juvenile jurisdiction when a youth on parole picks up an adult charge, transfers of eligible youth with felonies to IDOC, and appropriate biannual reclassifications had reduced the number of maximum security youth at Kewanee prior to closure. Harrisburg is now tasked with the responsibility of housing and treating youth identified as JSOs. At the time of the October 2016 JHA visit to Harrisburg, there were two designated JSO units and twenty-two JSO youth. Harrisburg

Due to changes within IDJJ, it was necessary to change the makeup of the remaining facilities to meet the contemporary population's needs and composition. Part of the overall shift included designating Warrenville as a coed facility. This report focuses on observations and information from JHA's 2016 Warrenville monitoring visits and notable changes since our prior facility reports.<sup>14</sup>

### II. Warrenville

Warrenville is now classified as a multiple-security level juvenile female and minimum and medium-security juvenile male facility. During the April 2016 JHA visit, the facility was in the early weeks of accepting male youth transfers, and housed 23 youth, with 11 girls and 12 boys.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in December 2016, at the time of the latest JHA monitoring visit to Warrenville, there were twenty-four youth, with a larger percentage of male youth; nine girls and 15 boys.<sup>16</sup>

At the time of JHA's 2016 visits, there were a few staff vacancies, but the majority of direct service staff positions were filled.<sup>17</sup> Noted vacancies in December included a school counselor,

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administrators stated that while there had been changes to better fit the needs of the youth labeled as JSOs there was still more to be done and they aimed to revamp the JSO program, modeling it after the trauma informed care program offered at Indian Oaks Academy (Indian Oaks). IDJJ has partnered with Indian Oaks, a private mental health treatment facility located fifty miles south of Chicago in Manteno, Illinois, to provide Harrisburg mental health staff with ongoing JSO specific training. Additionally, Indian Oaks has accepted several youth in IDJJ custody, specifically adolescents who suffer from severe emotional and behavioral issues, and struggle with problematic sexual behavior. In partnering with Indian Oaks, IDJJ hopes to establish a treatment program for youth that can have continuity if youth begin while they are incarcerated and continue treatment into their aftercare period. Indian Oaks serves boys and girls, including those who have demonstrated unhealthy sexual behaviors or have been sexually, physically, or emotionally abused, offering various forms of therapy including sexuality therapy that "addresses inappropriate behaviors, boundary issues, sex education, and personal victimization issues." See Indian Oaks website, <http://www.nexus-yfs.org/sites/IndianOaks/index>. JHA visited Indian Oaks in December 2016. JHA will continue to monitor and report on developments affecting IDJJ youth.

<sup>14</sup> JHA's prior reports for Warrenville are available at, [www.thejha.org/warrenville](http://www.thejha.org/warrenville); the 2014 report was published in January 2015.

<sup>15</sup> By Race: eight White youth (six girls and two boys), 11 Black youth (four girls and seven boys) and four Hispanic youth (one girl and three boys). By age for girls: 15 - two, 16 - four, 17 - one, 18 - two, and 19 - two. By age for boys: 14 - one, 15 - four, and 16 - seven. Administrators noted that Warrenville could potentially house about 65 youth in total, with about 45 boys; however, with a population increase they would need to increase mental health staffing to be able to continue to provide individual treatment.

<sup>16</sup> At the time of the December visit, the facility housed two transgender youth, one young transman and one young transwoman. During the April visit, Warrenville housed a young transwoman.

<sup>17</sup> This included about 75 security staff members (including supervisors) for a total staff to youth ratio around 3:1 (however, staff work three shifts - during daytime hours most cottages, which housed fewer than six youth, would be supervised by one or two staff members). The majority of the staff members are relatively recent hires with fewer than five years of correctional experience. Warrenville hires Juvenile Justice Specialist Interns (JJSIs) after their twelve-month probationary/training period, during which time they receive formal classroom instruction and on the job training while performing beginning level professional duties. All JJSI's must possess a Bachelor's Degree and some have advanced degrees such as a Master's Degree in Social Work, Counseling and Family Therapy, etc. The new JJSI's are trained at the academy and also at the facility on a variety of mental health topics, including a three-hour training on Emergency and Non-Emergency Mental Health Services, Sexual Abuse and Harassment Prevention

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who has since been hired, a special education resource coordinator, which as of June 2017, the facility had interviewed for, and a new school principal, with a candidate selected pending background clearance as of summer 2017. Warrenville administrators noted that like most correctional facilities, they face challenges retaining qualified individuals with advanced degrees.

### ***Finding: Warrenville faces detrimental budget and physical plant challenges.***

Due to the statewide financial impasse caused by the lack of a state budget, Warrenville, like most state facilities, struggled throughout 2016 to meet elements of basic custodial needs. Administrators reported during JHA visits that even given the significant changes with the facility becoming coed, the budget impasse created the greatest challenge of 2016. Warrenville has had services terminated and problems finding new vendors due to delinquent payments. Smaller, local vendors in particular cannot sustain lack of payment like larger corporate vendors who can continue to do business without immediate payment. Finding replacement vendors is reportedly very difficult because no one wants to do business with state of Illinois. Administrators with long tenures in the juvenile justice system reported that they have never had an experience like this where they are so “paralyzed” by the state’s lack of funds. Another issue noted was that vendors often hold Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) nonpayment against IDJJ, even though the agencies are separate, and IDJJ has its own budget and some increased funding and flexibility due to the *R.J.* consent decree. JHA finds administrators’ frustration understandable, as it is up to the governing powers to end the budget stalemate, which cause daily challenges, indignities, and harms to people in facilities, including staff and the children in their care.

Lights in the facility parking lot had been off for months in December because Warrenville had been unable to pay the bill. The facility went through three food vendors in the 2016 fiscal year and had ongoing trouble finding a vendor who could provide fresh fruit and produce to the facility. Administrators reported that other essential services were threatened to be suspended and terminated including trash removal. Extremely old vehicles or those with 150,000 or more miles on them cannot be replaced. Facility roofs need to be fixed and administrators were “praying” they would last through the winter. Administrators acknowledged that heating the facility was an issue and a generator was insufficient and failing. Some youth complained, and JHA visitors during the December 2016 visit experienced, that housing units were uncomfortably cold.

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and Intervention Program, and Use of Therapeutic Restraints. Staff who are Crisis Team Members are additionally trained quarterly, face-to-face by mental health staff, on various topics including additional gender identity differences, gender differences, crisis response procedures, and mental health disorders. Administrators reported that most Warrenville staff have had Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI) training.

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Warrenville continues to request funds to improve the gym floor, replace missing floor tiles throughout the facility, and add safety fixtures to bathrooms.<sup>18</sup> Doors, locks, and windows throughout the facility also needed attention. JHA visitors observed that while there are many colorful murals, areas of the facility needed to be repainted. Administrators reported the facility had no paint to use, but occasionally staff donated paint and their time to such improvements. Staff also mentioned that while counselor offices are located on housing units, they do not have computers and connectivity, which would make their work easier. In the school, staff reported they cannot get all the computer equipment needed.<sup>19</sup> At the time of the December 2016 JHA visit, the facility had a Business Administrator, but was without a Business Manager, who is the midlevel staff person who would deal with vendor and payment issues; this position was still unfilled as of June 2017.

***Recommendation: JHA continues to recommend that Illinois appropriately resource and maintain its custodial facilities.***

***Finding: While Warrenville administrators reported they have had a fairly smooth transition to a coed environment, housing and treatment of both boys and girls introduces important population management considerations.***

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<sup>18</sup> Physical plant projects completed since JHA's prior reports included that the gym now has improved temperature controls (heat was reportedly lacking for three years), safety sinks were installed in one area, all but one cottage (Sandburg) have safety furniture (staff noted that tie-off points have been eliminated), perimeter razor wire was added so that the facility could house youth with higher security considerations, upgraded cable services, and other sundry improvements.

<sup>19</sup> As at all IDJJ facilities, Warrenville uses the "blended learning" model, which incorporates both live instruction and self-directed, self-paced work on subjects on the computer to earn school credits. Under the model, youth can ask the teacher questions if they are having problems and get personal assistance. Youth have varying opinions about this classroom format. Warrenville staff stated that to get youth engaged in learning in first period class they have the youth write in journals to help them develop writing skills and self-awareness. Youth with all different backgrounds and academic levels are in classrooms, so simultaneous accommodating different youths' needs is challenging. Youth who leave custody can continue to use the GradPoint program, <http://www.pearsoned.com/prek-12-education/products-and-services/online-and-blended-learning-solutions/gradpoint/>, for free on outside computers after they leave IDJJ to get school credits. Many youth who leave IDJJ do not reenroll in school for various reasons. During the 2016 visits, Warrenville did not report any firm plans relating to post-secondary educational offerings. The facility was in discussions with the College of DuPage about possibly offering college prep classes at Warrenville. As of June 2017, administrators report that they anticipate that college offerings through the College of DuPage will begin in Winter 2018. The short length of stay for most youth makes in-depth program or certificate programs difficult to deliver. Warrenville was also a site of a pilot study funded by MacArthur where youth had access to Edovo tablets, <https://edovo.com/>, which had educational and entertainment content. The tablets were being used by a few youth as an incentive for good behavior and for youth who were in intake status or had completed school. JHA staff observed that there appeared to be a lot of content on the tablet, however, in April 2016 when we tried to watch videos the device stalled repeatedly, despite the considerable grant-funded expense in creating a hotspot for use in the facility library. Administrators report that youth enjoy the devices and can earn an hour of entertainment content for every hour of educational content. Although grant funding for the tablets has expired and there is no plan for expanded use, IDJJ is continuing a contract for licensing, content, connectivity, and replacement parts at the two pilot sites, Warrenville and IYC-Chicago.

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Originally, boys were identified for placement at Warrenville using criteria set by IDJJ of 16 or younger, low or medium escape risk, an Administrative Review Date (ARD)<sup>20</sup> date three to 10 months away, and willingness to participate in “comprehensive, intensive and structured programming.” Based on population constraints, Warrenville now also accepts 17-year-old boys. A multi-disciplinary team including mental health staff screens youth for placement at Warrenville, excluding those with histories of sexual aggression or violence. While some of these determinations can be made based on information in IDJJ’s data system, Youth360, Warrenville staff reported they also interview boys at IYCs St. Charles and Harrisburg,<sup>21</sup> either in person or by video conference prior to having them placed at the facility. Generally, these boys are younger, i.e. sixteen and under, and considered to be low risk and need level, e.g. they do not have the most serious treatment needs. Some boys are placed at Warrenville because they are identified by IDJJ as “vulnerable,” or having some characteristics that require closer attention and it is a way to house them apart from older, larger, higher aggression, or identified predatory youth. Staff noted that while Warrenville is not a set placement for boys with high needs or acute mental health needs, some of the boys are “just as needy” as the girls, and have equal need for attention and treatment.

When any youth arrives at Warrenville, staff conduct a rigorous review of all available information and a comprehensive investigation of the youth’s background, which can include reviewing master files, speaking with parents,<sup>22</sup> or tracking down school,<sup>23</sup> social service and mental health histories.<sup>24</sup> These efforts take considerable staff time but as Warrenville is a small facility, staff feel this comprehensive review is achievable. Staff stressed the importance of identifying untreated and undertreated issues from the outset so that treatment could be provided. Warrenville continues to provide all youth with mental health treatment services. Administrators noted that some boys came to the facility without previously having had any individual or group

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<sup>20</sup> This is the first date that a youth can be considered for release. As of January 1, 2017, due to a legislative change, IDJJ will be taking over release decision-making, which historically was a function of the Prisoner Review Board (PRB), and IDJJ represents that they are “retooling the way we set lengths of stay and determine release, anchoring these processes in research and best practices for youth.” IDJJ Annual Report 2016, <https://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/IDJJ%202016%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>. Administrators report that the new process permits positive staff and youth engagement and more expeditious reviews based on objective criteria. JHA will continue to report on this major process change in 2017.

<sup>21</sup> Boys have not been placed at Warrenville from IYC-Pere Marquette, since that facility is a special low security facility that boys can earn their way into. See <http://www.thejha.org/peremarquette>.

<sup>22</sup> JHA appreciates that IDJJ has made efforts to increase family engagement as recommended since our prior visits and reports. Warrenville permits special visits to accommodate parents’ schedules by appointment and have added a regular 6-7:30 p.m. visiting period.

<sup>23</sup> Warrenville staff remarked that they have been good at getting youths’ prior school records and have established relationships and good contacts at other schools, but described the process of tracking down records as labor intensive, with a lot of “detective work” on their part to piece together histories, especially when kids switch schools often and are in and out of detention.

<sup>24</sup> Staff noted that they are not yet reliably getting reports, including prior Youth Assessment Screening Instrument (YASI) assessments, from county detention centers, although a few counties, including Champaign, do now send these with youth at intake. IDJJ began conducting and using YASI assessments in November 2015. See IDJJ Annual Report 2016, <https://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Documents/IDJJ%202016%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf>.

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therapy. Several youth commented during JHA visits that they now aspire to be therapists and help other kids who had hard experiences like they did.

In preparation for the coed transition, Warrenville preemptively adopted an internal policy to ensure safe movement and supervision within and outside the facility. Internal policy for moving youth throughout the facility units and grounds dictates that two staff members monitor all movement within the facility at all times. This policy was adopted shortly before the coed transition, and helps to ensure that movement is well controlled and that all cross-gender interactions are supervised at all times. Boys and girls are housed according to their identified gender and safety needs. All housing units are single-celled. During the December visit, when there were 24 youth, there were three cottages for girls and three for boys. As of June 2017, there are four cottages for 22 male youth, and three cottages for 12 girls. At the time of the December visit, the young transwoman was housed in a cottage by herself for safety purposes due to disciplinary misconduct involving other Warrenville girls. The reduced population size permits staff to be able to move youth to different cottages, if necessary, such as when conflict arises, mitigating the risk of youth-on-youth violence. Given the small population and the high staff-to-youth ratio, staff is more readily able to identify individual and group needs to ensure youth and staff safety, especially on the housing units where youth have the majority of their recreation time.

Administrators also reported that Warrenville trained staff in preparation for working with youth in a coed facility; this training covered differences in physical development, emotional and cognitive development, common negative behaviors, types of mental health disorders by gender, coping differences, suicide in juvenile justice, peers/relationships, and gender based strategies for security supervision.<sup>25</sup> This one-time training for existing staff prior to the co-ed transition took approximately three hours, and it has been included in the training new staff receive during the onboarding process.

Overall staff reported that becoming a coed facility has been beneficial and that youth tend to look forward to coed activity, creating an incentive. Some examples they offered of improvements since the transition included that the girls were better behaved because they wanted opportunities to be in activities with boys, improvements in personal hygiene, and decrease of “girl drama” because the girls are reportedly more focused on flirting with the boys than fighting with one another. Staff noted that they saw a reduction of concerning behavioral escalation at the facility since Warrenville became coed. Some staff also expressed that the presence of girls also calms the boys down.

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<sup>25</sup> *Understanding Adolescents: Differences and Similarities between Males and Females* Handout.

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Some early issues noted during visits were that boys wanted different commissary items and library books than were available,<sup>26</sup> and that there was more need for staff vigilance monitoring for gang issues with male youth, including around phone use.<sup>27</sup> Staff reported that many youth complaints after the coed transition were about disparate treatment, for example if boys got a group photograph taken and girls did not. Some youth reported concerns to JHA about favoritism or inconsistent treatment from staff. A few boys expressed that they got more tickets at Warrenville than at other facilities and some said they found the facility “boring.” Administrators reported that some boys will boundary test and want to know if they will be sent back to other facilities for fighting; they are told they will not just be sent back to where they came from, efforts are made to understand the problem and address it before a facility transfer would be considered. Specifically, issues have been managed with de-escalation techniques and problem solving, including bed changes to separate certain youth. The Ombudsman also visits the facility regularly and addresses issues.<sup>28</sup>

Staff noted that with a coed facility there can be different types of “drama” among the youth, who are now vying for attention from the opposite sex, not just each other. To deal with “drama” and inter-social conflicts, the facility uses various techniques including role playing, mediation, use of “cool downs” (where a youth is removed from the conflict situation to get control of their emotions and rejoin group when they are emotionally composed again), and ready to learn (RTL) (a similar sort of time out to limit school disruptions).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> At the time of the JHA April 2016 visit, sports and hip hop magazines and urban fiction were noted library needs. The facility has no budget for the library and relies on donations. There is no interlibrary loan agreement between the facility and other libraries. JHA recommends that such a relationship be explored.

<sup>27</sup> One boy expressed to JHA that he felt people got in trouble and could get ticketed if you even mention social media on the phone or “ask family members how your homies are doing.” He stated that the staff is afraid you are going to do gang stuff, but you just want to not lose touch with the outside world, your friends, and your life outside prison.

<sup>28</sup> See <https://www.illinois.gov/idjj/Pages/IndependentOmbudsman.aspx> including visit dates and issues raised by facility in the Ombudsman’s first public annual report for fiscal year 2016 published in 2017. One finding of this report, echoing JHA’s experiences, is that youth resoundingly report that the grievance system is flawed. Warrenville administrators commented that girls in particular “love to file grievances.” However, administrators reported during the April 2016 JHA visit that they have been doing a better job educating youth about how to request remedies through the grievance system to address problems.

<sup>29</sup> When youth act out in school they are taken to a separate RTL room to think about behavior and identify how to better handle issues of conflict and to verbalize feelings. On the RTL room wall are negative and positive words describing feelings and goals to help kids identify and articulate what is going on with them internally and verbalize their feelings and triggers or antecedents that caused them to feel angry, sad, threatened, anxious, or to misbehave, as well as words to help youth identify positive behaviors and responses they can use. Staff explained that the important part of RTL is for youth to reflect and to calm down and come away with better understanding of self and options for dealing with bad feelings, triggers, and conflicts that arise. Staff noted that commonly youth must apologize for behavior after a RTL incident to “own their behavior.” Staff also acknowledged that it can be difficult for youth to apologize publicly, not because they do not feel remorse, but because they feel embarrassed and overwhelmed, causing squirming and anxiety. To help with this, many youth will write out their apologies and read them out loud so they do not buckle under pressure and forget what they want to say.

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Staff appreciated that both boys and girls come to the facility with past trauma and their primary coping skills are “fight or flight” responses. At Warrenville, staff try to present youth with a range of other possible ways of negotiating problems, particularly by verbalizing emotions and talking out conflicts. A staff member expressed that, “You can’t just remove the coping mechanisms that kids developed to survive outside without giving them new coping mechanisms and skills to use when they return to the community.”

In accordance with Warrenville internal policy, boys and girls only interact in supervised controlled settings during dietary, school hours, and special programming. The opportunities for coed activity have increased over the course of 2016, as the facility adapted to managing a coed population. For dietary, boys and girls eat at the same time, but are seated at different tables by cottage with staff supervision. During the April 2016 JHA visit, we observed lots of giggling and normal teenage interaction in the coed dining room setting. Some boys expressed they felt portions were smaller at Warrenville than at the all-male facilities. The “state meat” manufactured within IDOC by Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI), including hot dogs, was again reported by youth to be “gross” and unpopular during the April 2016 visit. Administrators noted that staff would sometimes buy youth non-state sausages, and stated that IDJJ would move off of the IDOC master menu with ICI products, which administrators reported did occur in fall 2016.

Boys and girls do not work in dietary, or in other job assignments, at the same time. School classrooms are not coed, but substance abuse education,<sup>30</sup> which takes place in the classrooms, and parenting classes may be coed. Mental health staff stated that most treatment groups are not coed because of comfort, safety, and privacy considerations.<sup>31</sup> However, the facility was open to having coed groups where appropriate and where it would help therapy rather than hinder services, as they want youth to be able to focus on programs, and coed classes are sometimes a distraction. Staff noted that some youth are more self-conscious and less participatory in coed group.

Administrators stated that coed activities are offered on special occasions, such as holidays like Thanksgiving; and for youth on level 1, or STAR level,<sup>32</sup> who are rewarded for good behavior

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<sup>30</sup> Warrenville’s contract with Wells Center, <http://www.wellscenter.org> had changed so that there was no longer a dedicated Substance Abuse Treatment cottage; instead treatment or education is offered to all youth at the facility with the type of programming offered based on need.

<sup>31</sup> Mental health treatment reportedly focuses on using Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) principles to address mental health and problem behaviors, and Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Crisis (SPARCS) is offered.

<sup>32</sup> The level system is a positive behavior interventions and support (PBIS) system meant to incentivize and improve youth behavior by teaching them new behavioral skills and rewarding them with points, access to the PBIS store, and ability to earn higher levels with greater privileges. Youth earn points on a daily basis based on their behavior. Every day youth receive a point card and throughout the day they can earn up to 34 points on a program day and 24 points on a non-program day. The point scale is based on the following criterion; 2 points-for complying with staff instruction with little or no prompting, 1 point-for when staff have to give re-direction and several prompts for compliance, 0 points-for disruptive and defiant behavior where a youth remains uncooperative despite staff attempts to correct, coach, and redirect behavior. The staff supervising that particular block of time designates points. The

## JHA 2016 Monitoring Visits to IYC-Warrenville

with activities including off-grounds trips.<sup>33</sup> Warrenville also offers coed weekly church services and some coed volunteer-led programming, such as Storycatchers Theatre.<sup>34</sup> One boy who had been housed at IYC-Chicago stated that he felt that he got to partake in more activities at that facility; however, unlike at Warrenville, there was not space outside to play.<sup>35</sup> During the April JHA visit, staff and youth commented on a recent positive experience where some boys were tasked with assembly of bikes that some boys and girls were then allowed to ride. Staff noted on that day they had zero disciplinary issues and the youth just got to be kids and enjoy themselves.

In order to support the unique challenges and differing needs presented in running a coed facility, it is important for Warrenville staff and administrators to receive ongoing training and access to guidance and information on this topic. Research has shown that in mixed and coed treatment groups, there are often fewer females than males creating an imbalanced space that often discourage females from participating or sharing in group settings.<sup>36</sup> According to a seminal 1998 study, when the unnecessary demand for the attention of adolescent males is removed, female participants are more likely to speak freely about their lived experiences and focus on

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points can then be used at the PBIS store where they can purchase snacks, make-up, hygiene items, greeting cards, or puzzle books. Furthermore, the points are used to determine a youth's level, which can fall into one of five levels beginning with welcome level, level 3-79.9% or below, level 2-80%-89.9%, and level 1-90%-94.9%, and STAR level 1-95% or above. Each level has its own set of incentives such as access to more commissary, off-grounds activities, lunch with family visits, usage of beauty supplies, or leisure time activities (movies, video games, and special monthly coed activities). See Warrenville Student Handbook, 2017. During the visit staff commented that they are now keeping youth on level longer, giving youth more to earn and making level privileges harder to lose.

<sup>33</sup> During 2016, youth went on about 30 field trips including to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Steppenwolf Theatre, College of DuPage, Expo Chicago Navy Pier, Ravinia, along with various other theater performances and facility-based tournaments.

<sup>34</sup> Storycatchers Theatre is a nonprofit organization based in Chicago that serves criminal justice system involved youth by helping them write and perform their original dramatic and musical materials inspired by their personal narratives. <http://www.storycatcherstheatre.org/>. In October 2016, JHA attended a family and staff production of the youth led original play *Dear Sky*. Such productions are typically open to the public with a necessary security review. Boys and girls participated in the production, which was about the coed transition from the perspective of the youth, particularly the girls who were at Warrenville before, during, and after the transition. The play did a great job capturing the struggles associated to the coed transition including the increased need amongst the two groups to be noticed by members of the opposite sex. During the visits, Warrenville administrators noted that they would like to offer more mentoring programs (such as this program at offered at St. Charles <http://www.kairosfillinois.org/chicago-torch.html>) and although they had a program where youth can read to a dog, they would like to have a dog training program (like Safe Humane, <http://www.safehumanechicago.org/>, offered at IYC-Chicago), but they had not yet found a program willing to come to the facility. As of June 2017, administrators reported that as of the new year they now have a partnership with the Naperville Area Humane Society for the Pawsitive Future program, <http://www.napervilleareahumanesociety.org/humane-education/project-pawsitive-future>, and the first dog who was trained at the facility has been placed in a home and the youth are already working with a second dog and that youth can request the dog be present for therapy sessions. JHA applauds this partnership and looks forward to seeing this program on future visits.

<sup>35</sup> As noted in JHA IYC-Chicago reports, e.g. 2012, a limitation of that facility is the lack of outdoor recreation space, which consists of a paved, walled sally port area, and that use of the space is also restricted due to weather and other factors. See <http://www.thejha.org/iycchicago>.

<sup>36</sup> Watson, L. Edelman, P. *Improving the Juvenile Justice System for Girls: Lessons from the States*. Georgetown Center on Poverty Inequality and Public Policy. October 2012. [http://www.law.georgetown.edu/academics/centers-institutes/poverty-inequality/upload/jds\\_v1r4\\_web\\_singles.pdf](http://www.law.georgetown.edu/academics/centers-institutes/poverty-inequality/upload/jds_v1r4_web_singles.pdf).

their own rehabilitation.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, research also suggests that gender-specific services and environments tend to foster increased sense of community, which is positively linked to healthy adolescent identity development.<sup>38</sup> Coed facilities and programs often approach boys' and girls' behavior similarly despite ample research that suggests developmental and socialization differences between the two genders.<sup>39</sup> An example of communication style differences was found in a study conducted by the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, which noted that on average "girls use up to 5,000 words a day while males only use 1,500"<sup>40</sup> giving the illusion that they are being difficult, resistant, manipulative, or disobedient.<sup>41</sup> Contrary to girls, boys are less likely to be verbal and may have less of a verbal desire to discuss their incarceration. Thus, there might be the misconception that if a girl wants to continuously talk about her punishment, incarceration, or experience she may be perceived as resistant or manipulative when in fact she is psychologically trying to process her reality. Given such factors, research and policy recommendations alike have predominantly focused on promoting gender responsive, single-gender programming and single-gender environments. However, while the National Council on Crime & Delinquency 2011 report<sup>42</sup> found that girls cope with their incarceration differently than boys, and that often the girls' shared histories of sexual abuse and trauma complicated their interaction with male staff and male peers, the report further points out that there can be both positive and negative consequences of girls' exposure to males while they are incarcerated, as long as staff adhere to professional guidelines and boundaries.<sup>43</sup>

The ongoing importance of ensuring that staff have the requisite tools and knowledge to manage Warrenville's diverse population in a gender responsive manner cannot be overstated.

***Recommendation: Warrenville should ensure staff have adequate training and resources to manage coed population issues, including developmental and externalizing behavioral differences of boys and girls.***

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<sup>37</sup> Myhand, M.N. & Kivel, P. (1998). *Young women's lives: Building self-awareness for life: A multi-session curriculum*. Center City, MN: Hazelden.

<sup>38</sup> Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), "Gender Specific Programming," (October 2010). [https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Gender-Specific\\_Programming.pdf](https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Gender-Specific_Programming.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Iowa Commission: Promising Directions-Programs that Service Iowa Girls in Same-Sex Environments-2005 [http://www.women.iowa.gov/resources\\_tools/docs/PromisingDirections.pdf](http://www.women.iowa.gov/resources_tools/docs/PromisingDirections.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> National Council on Crime and Delinquency, "What Happens When Girls are in the Same Programs as Boys" 2011, [http://www.nccdglobal.org/sites/default/files/publication\\_pdf/whgspb.pdf](http://www.nccdglobal.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdf/whgspb.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

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Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois' juvenile and adult correctional facilities.

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