

Shuman Juvenile Detention Center Investigation



Office of the Allegheny County Manager

March 8, 2013

SHUMAN JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

INVESTIGATION

In response to a petition signed by approximately 70 employees of the Shuman Juvenile Detention Center (hereafter referred to as Shuman) who claim they face a hostile work environment, the Allegheny County Executive directed the Office of the County Manager to investigate their assertions and concerns.

The manager's office conducted this review to gain an understanding of the work environment, processes, and to examine other operational functions of Shuman to address the employees' aforementioned concerns. This report documents the review results and provides corrective action steps that are to be implemented by Shuman's Director.

BACKGROUND

History

The first provision in Pennsylvania law for the detention of juveniles was enacted July 2, 1901. "In every city of the first and second class there shall be provided a house of detention, for the reception of untried juvenile offenders and neglected and dependent children." (P.L. 601, Section 1) This legislation came out of the turn of the century movement to separate juveniles and adults in the justice system.

In 1899, Illinois established the nation's first Juvenile Court providing special court proceedings and auxiliary institutions such as detention, probation, and correctional schools. By 1945, every state had enacted legislation to establish Juvenile Courts. The first autonomous Juvenile Court in Pennsylvania was founded in Allegheny County in 1933.

The Juvenile Court was built in 1936 on Forbes Avenue in the Oakland District of Pittsburgh. Detention occupied the third and fourth floors of the building and served both delinquent and dependent children less than sixteen years of age. In 1938, the State amended the law, raising the age of jurisdiction to seventeen. In 1963, Allegheny County Children and Youth Services was founded to serve dependent youth. Within a few years, separate housing was established for dependent children, leaving only delinquent youth in detention.

During the 1960s, plans were initiated to build a new detention home due to increased population and the need for improved services. In December 1974, Shuman Juvenile Detention Center opened at 7150 Highland Drive in the East End of Pittsburgh.

Shuman is a department of Allegheny County and its director reports to the Allegheny County Manager. Additionally, there is a Shuman Detention Board of Advisors.

Mission

The mission of Shuman Center is to provide safe, secure custody and to promote the health and well-being of youths committed to its care. Shuman Center also aims to create an environment that fosters social, emotional, intellectual and physical development.

The mission of Shuman Center is pursued in accord with the Pennsylvania Juvenile Act and regulations governing secure detention as set forth in 55 Pennsylvania Code Chapter 3760.

SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

Our review was broad based in that we observed the work environment, toured the physical plant and associated security practices, and studied hiring and payroll practices. Operational, payroll, and financial records were also examined.

Our methodology in conducting this review included:

- Interviewing the Director, Deputy Director, members of the administrative staff, and other management employees.
- Interviewing union staff that signed and didn't sign the petition.
- Directing the Allegheny County Police to perform a walkthrough of the facility and observe its current security measures.
- Reviewing the organizational chart and job descriptions.
- Reading Director Reports submitted to the Shuman Detention Board of Advisors.
- Reviewing select time and attendance sheets, and related payroll records.
- Reviewing population census statistics, revenues, and expenditures data.

Any directives issued by the Manager's office are with the intent to better improve management and employee relations, increase accountability and operational efficiencies, strengthen internal controls, and enhance the safety of employees and residents of Shuman.

OBSERVATIONS & ACTION STEPS

Work Environment & Morale

There is an environment that consists of a lack of trust between many of the staff and management. This environment includes a perceived or real disconnect between the two groups, which results in low morale and inefficient operations. Employees don't trust management and management believes that poor performing employees are exaggerating situations that inevitably emerge at a juvenile detention facility. Either way, measures have to be taken to enhance the relationship between management and staff to allow an honest sharing of ideas and concerns that can be worked through collectively. The current atmosphere is counterproductive and is a barrier to Shuman accomplishing its stated Mission statement, which includes: "...aims to create an environment that fosters social, emotional, intellectual and physical development."

Action Step:

The director and leadership team at Shuman will conduct an employee commitment and satisfaction survey. This survey is an important and useful tool to obtain information from employees regarding which areas are working well and which areas need improvement. To encourage high participation, the survey and resulting data will be:

- Asked of every employee.
- Conducted electronically and anonymously, as the information will be collected and summarized by an outside vendor. (Consequently, there is no way to connect the answers to the person completing the survey and there can be no retaliation for honest, thoughtful, and complete surveys.)
- Reviewed by Shuman management, staff, Allegheny County Human Resources Department (HR), and the Allegheny County Manager's office.

The director will establish an Employee Relations Committee comprised of key management and staff, Human Resources, and the Manager's Office, which will meet every month to meet and discuss issues and concerns. This committee will utilize the results of the survey data to begin thoughtful and respectful discussion on issues and create remedies to resolve. This initiative may also include an outside facilitator to coordinate this effort.

Shuman's leadership must and shall take a lead in this effort to improve the relationship with its staff.

Implementation timeline: April to June 2013

OBSERVATIONS & ACTION STEPS (II)

Hiring Practices

Shuman's hiring practices do not include HR's normal involvement in the hiring of part-timers; which, in this case, are the feeder group for almost all full-time employees. Unlike other departments, such as the Jail's part-time correctional officers, management at Shuman currently hires all part-timers without HR's involvement and review. Management then also selects who will be promoted to full-time status.

This circumvents the customary hiring practices with HR involvement and, ultimately results in all internal candidates exclusively selected by the director and deputy director. Hence, it almost always excludes external candidates from becoming employees and has led some staff to view select employees as those in favor of the current management.

Action Step:

HR will be fully engaged in all of the part-time, full-time, and promotional hiring practices of Shuman. The hiring processes will be fully discussed and developed with HR and will include, but is not be limited to:

- Developing a job description and minimum requirements.
- Posting the announcement/recruiting to broaden the pool of applicants.
- Screening applications.
- Developing the eligibility list.
- HR providing the letter approving promotions or new-hires.

The hiring of full-time Childcare Workers at Shuman will involve an evaluation by Shuman with documented evidence supporting the recommendation; after which, the application for full-time employment will be sent to HR to be reviewed. Should HR determine the candidate is not acceptable, they can refuse the promotion.

Implementation timeline: By April 30, 2013

OBSERVATIONS & ACTION STEPS (III)

Time / Attendance procedures & fund raising activities:

Some employees believe that the payroll function does not operate accurately or efficiently. The Manager's office reviewed a sample of time and attendance, schedule sheets, and payroll records. The sample appeared to reflect numerous discrepancies in which employees did not clock into the time system yet received a full pay without any documentation to justify time paid. This sample also appeared to reflect instances where additional staff was not required or necessary, such as on holidays and/or with very low population enrollment. Although Shuman has implemented the Kronos payroll system, common errors continue as described above.

Various employees also have concerns over a fund that is titled: "Shuman Center Resident Fund," which solicits cash and nonmonetary donations for the residents. Some employees do not have confidence that the donations are properly utilized as solicited and promoted, and have no assurance donated items are actually used to help the residents or the facility. The Manager's office reviewed the audited financial statements of Allegheny County and determined this bank account and related transactions do not run directly through the financial statements and established controls of Allegheny County.

Action Step:

On December 17, 2012, the Manager requested the Allegheny County Controller's Office to perform an internal audit of the Shuman payroll system and the "Shuman Center Resident Fund". Any added value findings and recommendations which strengthen controls over these two accounts would be welcome.

Implementation timeline: A February 26, 2013, memo to Shuman from the Controller's Office communicated they will accept this engagement request and began their fieldwork on March 11, 2013.

OBSERVATIONS & ACTION STEPS (IV)

Security:

The Shuman security staff (building guards) presently report to the director and deputy director. (I.e. any/all incidents that involve security are brought to the director or the deputy director). In the current environment, there are groups of employees that believe management sides with selected/favorite employees and, as a result, security investigations of incidents are compromised due to management's direct supervision of the security staff.

Action Step:

To ensure appropriate segregation of duties and operational functions, the building guards which currently report to the Shuman Director will now report directly to the Allegheny County Police. The Allegheny County Police Superintendent and his staff will review current security policies and procedures and implement changes wherever appropriate to enhance the safety and security of employees and residents. The County Police will perform all Shuman investigations. This authority will include direct responsibility of all videos and related security systems measures within the facility and the property.

Implementation timeline: Effective Immediately

OBSERVATIONS & ACTION STEPS (V)

Daily Population Decrease & Long-term Strategies:

The average daily population at Shuman has decreased by -59 per day or 42.5% over the past five years:

Total Average Daily Population for the year				
2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
139	118	99	95	80

Source: Shuman

However, there has been no corresponding decrease in budget or full-time equivalent (FTE) staff at Shuman. During the same period of time, the annual Allegheny County budget match to support funding for Shuman has remained constant at approximately \$5.4 million and 142 FTE staff. Residents now have available to them numerous other options of care throughout various after school programs and within the broad arms of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services. The population decreases over a five year period are no longer a trend but are a reality, which needs to be more thoroughly analyzed.

Shuman has closed a wing whenever possible; however, required Department of Public Welfare (DPW) staffing ratios for males and females, more troubled residents, and age separation limit these initiatives. The director and County Manager have begun discussing the correct right-sizing of the facility, along with a wide-range of potential revenue producing ideas for the underutilized space at the center.

Action Step:

As the needs of residents and other alternative service options have emerged over the past decade, the director must be proactive in identifying its future. The director shall take a more comprehensive and strategic approach, that will require research data with options to help craft Shuman's future service niche.

In addition, the manager's office will continue to undertake a review of Shuman's operations which may include engaging professional consulting services to support this effort.

Implementation timeline: Ongoing–Initial Plan ideas – September/October 2013

CONCLUSION

In summary, this report is a starting point to improve the culture, accountability, controls, efficiencies and effectiveness of the Shuman Juvenile Detention Center. There will be required, diligent monitoring of the aforementioned action steps along with other future initiatives to move the center to the heights we all desire.

Shuman leadership and staff must not lose sight of the important responsibilities (and rewards) they have to provide excellent services to the residents entrusted in their custody and work together to meet their written Mission statement which includes: "...to provide safe, secure custody and to promote the health and well-being of youths committed to its care."

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