

COMPSTAT for Juvenile Corrections by John Dempsey and John Vivian

As Chad returns from lunch, Jimmy grabs his shirt, spins him around and hits him repeatedly in the face and chest. Chad is a 16 year old chronic juvenile offender and gang member who recently arrived in secure care. Jimmy is a 17 year old chronic juvenile offender from a rival gang. A few juveniles circle around the combatants and yell encouragement to one or the other, meanwhile, most drop to their knees thereby refusing to endorse the violence. Staff immediately stop line movement, and separate the juveniles, while praising those who refused to participate in the melee. Both Chad and Jimmy are taken to Separation, where Chad is assessed and treated by a nurse for his broken nose, and Jimmy is interviewed by treatment and security staff to find out why he initiated the assault. Jimmy and Chad are later interviewed by the Department's gang specialist. A typical week within the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC) includes 11 juvenile assaults and 7 juvenile assaults on staff¹. Many juvenile correctional agencies across the nation struggle with the challenge of institutional violence (Cannon, 2004). Indeed, "if a male will ever be involved in violence, adolescence is when it will happen." (Zimring, 1998, 27).

Assaults and fights frequently result in injuries to juveniles or staff, disrupt the smooth functioning of a correctional facility, upset the treatment milieu and can result in costly medical expenses, Unless assaults are handled properly (Wortley, 2002), they can

¹ ADJC has an average population of 611 female and male juveniles who are housed in one of four secure care facilities.

increase juvenile and staff fear, damage the institutional culture and increase staff turnover.

ADJC has addressed the challenge (DiIulio, 1987) posed by juvenile assaults by adapting a technique from law enforcement known as COMPSTAT. This technique includes:

- mission clarification;
- internal accountability;
- geographic organization of operational command;
- data driven identification of problems and assessment of the department's problem-solving efforts;
- organizational flexibility;
- innovative problem-solving tactics; and
- external information exchange (Jannetta, 2006)

Director Michael D. Branham convenes a bi-weekly Central Office COMPSTAT review of assaults and other safe environment incidents. He insures that advice is provided by all of the key ADJC areas including top, mid-level and line facility managers, and representatives from Education, Clinical, Legal, Inspections and Investigations as well as Research and Development. During the Central Office COMPSTAT meeting each facility Superintendent presents his or her top problem areas as well as successes. A common topic in COMPSTAT meetings is classroom safety. Applause and congratulations are regularly given to unit staff who have reduced violence. Current and proposed intervention strategies to reduce assaults are discussed and input is provided by all disciplines. Time-bound action plans are presented to address the violence, and they commonly include Individual Behavior Plans (IBPs) for assaultive juveniles, and various management initiatives to promote safe environments.

The ADJC COMPSTAT program was initiated in June of 2007 and a comparison of assault rates before and after COMPSTAT was implemented indicate a reduction in violence has occurred. Given all of the other juvenile and institutional factors that affect violence (Poole and Regoli, 1983; Trulson, 2007; Vivian, Grimes and Vasquez, 2007) it is impossible to attribute the decline solely to COMPSTAT, but there is a strong feeling among ADJC staff that COMPSTAT is making a difference.

If the heart of the ADJC COMPSTAT program is the proactive and cross-disciplinary approach toward the management of violence, the soul of the program is real-time data. Facility crime maps (Karuppannan, 2005) are readily available that identify *hot spots* of assault activity by location and time. The maps permit local facility and Central Office analysts to understand what juveniles are involved as suspects and/or victims. The maps are linked to demographic and delinquency histories of the respective juveniles which allow for the development of relevant intervention strategies to prevent further violence. The maps, along with the associated links, were created by the tireless efforts of ADJC's Management Information Systems (MIS) staff.

ADJC has taken the COMPSTAT technique and applied it to juvenile corrections. The resulting violence reduction strategies are using real-time data and cross-disciplinary teams to develop plans that promote institutional safety. A safe correctional environment will allow Deputy Director Dr. Kellie Warren and her treatment teams to implement evidence-based programs to address the criminogenic needs of the juvenile offenders committed to the departments care and custody.

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