

**YOUTH SERVICES INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

*Testimony To The Review Panel On Prison Rape*

January 9, 2014

Washington, D.C.

Good morning members of the Review Panel On Prison Rape. My name is Jesse Williams and I am the Senior Vice President of Operations for Youth Services International (YSI). On behalf of Youth Services International, I want to thank you for the opportunity to present to you this morning. We congratulate the Panel for the work that you are doing in addressing one of the most critical issues in both juvenile and adult corrections today. Please know that we share the Panel's concerns and are fully committed to providing safe, humane environments in all of our programs where young people can realize their full potential for positive growth and development. I have been privileged to serve in the field of juvenile justice for 43 years. During that time I have held numerous positions in both state and local government including service as Deputy Director of the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, Administrator of Youth Services for the District of Columbia, Deputy Commissioner of the Philadelphia Department of Human Services, and Chief Juvenile Probation Officer for the City and County of San Francisco. The findings regarding the Paulding Regional Youth Detention Center as published in the 2012 report entitled "Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Facilities Reported by Youth" were without question one of the most troubling experiences of my entire professional career. In response to the findings about Paulding in the report YSI took decisive action both in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice and independently to address those issues.

The panel has asked that we address four issues in our testimony today. Specifically,

“The Panel would like you to submit a written statement that:

- (1) identifies the factors that led to the high incidence of sexual victimization at the Paulding Regional Youth Detention Center (Paulding) during the time of the Bureau of Justice Statistics report, Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Facilities Reported by Youth, 2012 (see attached),
- (2) Summarizes the measures that YSI has taken to reduce the prevalence and incidence of both youth-on-youth and staff-on-youth sexual assault at that facility,
- (3) Summarizes YSI’s efforts to prevent staff sexual misconduct, and in particular female staff sexual misconduct, at Paulding, and
- (4) Describes how YSI’s management of other facilities in Georgia is similar to or different from its management of Paulding.”

I will address each question in-turn.

**1 Factors that led to the high incidence of sexual victimization at the Paulding Regional Youth Detention Center**

- Upon learning of the report’s findings YSI conducted a review of all reports of allegations of sexual abuse that were filed internally and with DJJ during 2011, 2012, and 2013 as well as employee discipline during these time periods to determine if a pattern existed that had gone undetected by us. Our review did not disclose any such pattern.
- A review was conducted to determine whether reports regarding allegations of sexual abuse had been received from the staff who surveyed the youth at Paulding for the DOJ report to determine if reports of abuse

had been made to YSI staff or to DJJ which we did not act upon. It was determined that no reports were received from surveyors.

- A training and technical assistance request was made to the National PREA Resource Center
- At YSI's request a conference call was held with Dr. Allen Beck, Senior Statistical Advisor, DOJ/BJS, Dr. Philip Harris, (of Temple University) and Dr. Jon McCain (YSI's Vice President of Clinical Services) to discuss the findings of the DOJ Sexual Victimization Report regarding Paulding. The purpose of the call was for YSI to be better educated about the research methodology which led to the findings in the report and to understand the driving forces behind the high incident of reported sexual victimization.
- July/August, 2013 – A contract was negotiated and signed with The Moss Group to conduct their "Sexual Safety Assessment" for the express purpose of determining the root causes of the high incidence of sexual victimization and to recommend policy and procedure changes as well as programming interventions to address the identified causes.
- October, 2013 - A kick off meeting was held at Paulding RYDC for the Moss Group's Sexual Safety Assessment process.
- October 31<sup>st</sup> thru November 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 – On site Sexual Safety Assessment scheduled to begin at Paulding
- October, 2013 – Notification was received from the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice that due to declining statewide residential populations the contract for Paulding will expire as of December 31, 2013.

In summary, it is unfortunately not possible to say with absolute certainty what factors led to the reported high incidence of sexual victimization at Paulding since the process that was put in place to make that determination could not be fully executed. Even so, it was clear to us that the two areas of focus that would have

the most significant impact on reducing the likelihood of future victimization were the areas of staff screening/hiring and staff training. With that in mind the following steps were implemented.

- A contract was signed with Abel Screening in September, 2013 for the implementation of the “Diana Screen” at Paulding. The Diana Screen is a research- based employee screening mechanism which has been proven to screen out potential employees who have poor boundaries as well as those who may have sexually abused a child.
- 100% of staff completed YSI’s OJT PREA training.
- 98% of staff completed DJJ’s PREA online training. (Those staff who did not complete the training were on extended leave for unrelated matters).

2. **Summarize the measures that YSI has taken to reduce the prevalence and incidence of both youth-on-youth and staff-on-youth sexual assault at that facility**

- Reduced large scale movement and programming to increase supervision ratios.
- Youth receive education and instruction about PREA in the Commissioner’s introductory video.
- Juvenile Detention counselors provide PREA information to youth during orientation.
- Education guidance Counselors provide PREA information to youth during school orientation.

- Monthly youth surveys are completed to assess quality of life, conditions of confinement and protection from harm regarding PREA and any other safety issues.
- During shower time Youth are moved from their room (rather than the day room) to individual shower stalls to minimize movement, increase supervision and prevent PREA related incidents.
- Housing and classification meetings are held weekly to insure youth are housed properly and safely.
- PREA posters are placed on the housing units, lobby and cafeteria.
- PREA friendly shower curtains were purchased and utilized to aid in supervision

3. **Summarize YSI's efforts to prevent staff sexual misconduct and in particular female staff sexual misconduct**

- The practice of female staff searching male residents was ended.
- Female direct care staff are counseled personally by the Facility Administrator during her daily walk through of the facility.
- Unannounced visits are made by administrative staff to ensure PREA compliance.
- All staff receive PREA training during employee orientation.
- Online PREA training is provided to staff by DJJ Office of Training
- The Paulding Director provides PREA as a standing agenda item for quarterly full staff meetings.
- The Captain and Shift Supervisors provide PREA information updates at all shift briefings.

- Security managers provide PREA information/updates at the weekly security meeting, education staff meetings and treatment team meetings.
- Weekly facility inspections are conducted by the management team to ensure sanitation and PREA compliance.
- Eliminated unnecessary obstructions from windows throughout the facility to enhance supervision.
- Reduced blind spots by identifying and restricting areas of the facility lacking camera coverage.

**4. Describe how YSI's management of other facilities in Georgia is similar to or different than its management of Paulding.**

YSI manages two other facilities in Georgia. They are the Crisp Regional Youth Detention center in Cordele, GA and the Milan Youth Development Campus in Milan, GA. Crisp is a short term 64 bed facility for males and Milan is a long term 154 bed facility for males. Both facilities are operated under the same management structure as Paulding. Both Facility Administrators report to a Regional Vice President who reports directly to me.

Both facilities have fully implemented PREA compliance measures as prescribed by the Department of Juvenile Justice. For example:

- 100% of staff at both facilities have completed the OJT PREA training
- 100% of staff at both facilities have completed PREA online training
- PREA coordinators have been identified and trained at both facilities
- Both facilities provide PREA information to youth during orientation
- All youth at both facilities receive education and instruction about PREA via Commissioner Niles' introductory video
- Both facilities have undergone physical plant reviews by DJJ's PREA Compliance Coordinator

- Crisp is scheduled for a PREA compliance audit by DJJ on January 14, 2014.
- YSI is negotiating with a Certified PREA Auditor to have a formal audit of the Crisp RYDC conducted in March, 2014.
- Additionally, the Diana Screen will be implemented at both Crisp and Milan. As previously discussed, the Diana Screen is a research based employee screening mechanism which has been proven to screen out potential employees who have poor boundaries as well as those who may have sexually abused a child.
- Finally, the Facility Administrator of Crisp has recently completed training to become a Certified PREA Auditor. Although she cannot formally audit YSI facilities it is our intent to use her expertise to direct our ongoing PREA compliance measures.

In conclusion, Youth Services International has taken the implications of the Paulding report to heart and has implemented immediate and ongoing measures to ensure the safety of the youth in our care. We trust that the information which has been provided to the Panel today is ample evidence of our commitment to keeping the youth in our care free from harm.

Thank you.