



Michelle Shannon, National Director of the Irish Youth Justice Service, visits Horizon Juvenile Center.

Irish Juvenile Justice Officials Tour Horizon And Discuss Reform Efforts

On Monday, November 5th, the top official from the Republic of Ireland’s juvenile justice agency met with DJJ Commissioner Neil Hernandez and senior officials at Horizon Juvenile Center as part an official visit to the United States. The focus of her stay was to learn about the American juvenile justice system and initiate a dialogue with U.S. officials to exchange ideas and build international relations. Michelle Shannon, National Director of the Irish Youth Justice Service, discussed juvenile justice reform efforts with DJJ staff and had the opportunity to tour one of the agency’s three secure detention facilities.

Ms. Shannon was visit to DJJ enabled her to observe the City’s juvenile detention system and to discuss the Department’s policy developments. The Irish Youth Justice Service was created in 2006 to unite several agencies previously charged with juvenile justice in Ireland and to reform the system nationwide.

While discussing juvenile justice reform, DJJ officials highlighted some of the initiatives underway at the agency, including the Release to Parent initiative and the Collaborative Family Initiative. Both programs are designed to return youth to their communities while providing necessary support services. The Release to Parent initiative targets youth being admitted to DJJ facilities and attempts to instead allow the youth to return home with a parent or guardian until a determined court date. The Collaborative Family Initiative works to provide critical mental health services to youth after being released to a parent or guardian.

Assistant Commissioner for Communications Scott Trent said, “As DJJ continues to pursue juvenile justice reform, it is tremendously beneficial to host delegations from different jurisdictions at our facilities. The collaboration between agencies is crucial and the knowledge that we share can only improve the lives of youth in detention, both here and abroad.”

