

NYC Administration for Children’s Services Horizon Juvenile Center Dry Cells Audit Report – May 2020

On July 10, 2018, the NYC Board of Correction first granted the NYC Department of Correction (“the Department”) a six (6) month limited variance from Minimum Standard 1-04(b)(2) for the Horizon Juvenile Center’s Specialized Juvenile Detention (SJD) Facility (“Horizon”). This standard states: “*Each single cell shall contain a flush toilet, a wash basin with drinking water, a single bed and a closable storage container for personal property.*” (Emphasis added.) On Feb 15, 2020, the NYC Board of Correction renewed the Department’s six (6) month limited variance from Minimum Standard 1-04(b)(2) for Horizon¹. With two (2) exceptions, the individual cells or rooms for residents at Horizon do not contain “a flush toilet” or “a wash basin with drinking water” and are commonly referred to as “dry cells.” This audit only applies to the SJD portion of Horizon.

Pursuant to the six (6) month limited variance, allowing residents at Horizon to be housed in single occupancy dry cells, a monthly audit on compliance with the following three (3) variance conditions is required:

1. With respect to youth locked in dry cells, housing unit staff will escort residents of Horizon to the unoccupied housing area bathroom and will provide residents with drinking water within five (5) minutes of the request, absent extenuating circumstances.
2. Housing unit staff will document when a bathroom escort or drinking water is requested. Documentation will include the time of the request and the time escorting begins.
3. Notice of the specific terms and conditions of this variance and the right to notify the Board of any related violations shall be provided to Horizon residents.

Horizon Juvenile Center is co-operated by the NYC Department Corrections (DOC) and the NYC Administration for Children’s Services (“ACS”). Prior to August 2019, DOC was solely responsible for implementing procedures regarding compliance with the limited variance from Minimum Standard 1-04(b)(2) for Horizon in all housing areas. During the month of August 2019, ACS assumed responsibility for implementing procedures regarding compliance with the limited variance from Minimum Standard 1-04(b)(2) for Horizon in a limited number of housing areas and now has responsibility for all housing areas.

Compliance with the limited variance from Minimum Standard 1-04(b)(2) for Horizon in housing areas operated solely by ACS staff will be audited and reported on by ACS.

Audit Parameters

The audit is conducted through an onsite visit and a manual review of the DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbooks. A manual review of the logbooks was conducted on four (4) randomly selected dates during the month of May 2020:

¹ This variance was first renewed by the NYC Board of Correction on January 8, 2019, and has been continuously renewed since then

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- May 4
- May 12
- May 18
- May 25

The DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook² was established to document individualized information for each resident request, including the resident's name, book and case number, date, room number, light indicator time, time request was granted, and uniform staff information. The audit review was designed to determine whether residents were provided access to bathrooms and/or drinking water within five (5) minutes of their requests during lock-in hours, between 9 pm and 5 am³, absent extenuating circumstances. In addition, the audit reviewed the room confinement records in Horizon to determine whether residents in room confinement were granted access to bathroom and drinking water within five (5) minutes of their requests.

Residents at Horizon reside in dry cells, which are rooms that do not contain a flush toilet or wash basin with drinking water.⁴ Residents who are not in room confinement access bathrooms and drinking water without an escort during lock-out hours. During lock-in hours, from 9 pm to 5 am, a resident who needs to access the bathroom and/or drinking water pushes a button within his or her room which activates a red light, alerting housing unit staff that the resident has a request. The DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook is utilized to document the time of the request, based on the indicator light, and the time the request was granted to the resident.

In Horizon, residents reside in halls. For the purpose of this audit, the halls are listed from 1 to 10. ACS is responsible for compliance with the limited variance from Minimum Standard 1-04(b)(2) for Horizon within Halls 1 through 10 on the randomly selected audit dates⁵.

Site Visit

In addition to the logbook review, the audit included a site visit that began during the overnight tour (before 5am) on May 29, 2020. The purpose of the site visit was to observe procedures for the provision of access to the bathrooms and/or drinking water and to assess whether the notices of the variance conditions were properly posted in the halls and/or disseminated to Horizon residents. Please note the beginning of the month, there were 3 residents at Horizon. At the time of the site visit, there were 2 residents remaining. On May 14, 2020, one of the three residents were released from Horizon.

² The DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook is used to comply with the variance condition requirement that housing unit staff documents when a bathroom escort or drinking water is requested and is afforded.

³ On each randomly selected audit date, entries recorded in the DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook commencing from 9 pm on the previous date and ending at 5 am on the audit date were reviewed.

⁴ In the hall for residents with special medical needs, two (2) of the five (5) rooms contain a toilet and sink.

⁵ ACS assumed responsibility for Hall 7 on November 15th 2019.

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During the site visit, Youth Development Specialists on post were interviewed during the period when residents were locked in to assess their knowledge and understanding of the relevant variance condition requirements. In addition, the provision of bathroom and drinking water access during lock-in hours was observed.

The site visit also assessed whether:

- each hall had an operable water fountain or a water cooler; and
- Youth Development Specialists recorded both the residents’ requests to access the bathrooms and/or drinking water and the granting of such requests, and that the logbook entries accurately reflected the times taken to provide residents access to the bathrooms and/or drinking water.

Room Confinement

When room confinement occurs during any of the four (4) randomly selected audit dates, the audit includes an assessment of whether residents placed in room confinement⁶ during hours when residents are not normally locked in were provided access to bathrooms and/or drinking water within five (5) minutes of their requests. This component of the audit involves the review of “Room Confinement Authorization and Termination Forms”⁷ to identify residents in the facility who were placed in room confinement during the month on any of the four (4) randomly selected audit dates. In May 2020, no residents were placed in room confinement on any of the four (4) audit dates. If any resident was placed in room confinement, a logbook used to document observations and staff visitation to residents in room confinement and the DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook and in some cases the regular logbook also, are reviewed for the hall in which the residents were detained while on room confinement.

Site Visit Observations

On May 29, 2020, auditor conducted a site visit during the morning hours when residents were locked in their rooms. During the site visit, entries in the DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook in each hall for each of the audit dates were reviewed and analyzed, and on-site observations were made relative to the implementation of the variance conditions.

On the day of the site visit, the total resident count in each hall was:

Hall 7 – Two (2) residents

Through the audit, the following was observed:

⁶ Residents may be placed in room confinement for limited periods of time, in which youth are not permitted to leave their room except for authorized purposes and activities, when they are exhibiting behavior that constitutes serious or evident danger to themselves or others.

⁷ The Room Confinement Authorization and Termination Form is used to document the complete history of each room confinement, from referral to termination.

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Availability of Drinking Water

- Drinking water, either from water fountains or water coolers, were available in the hall.

Notice to Residents

- The “Notice to Residents” poster, notifying residents of the procedures for access to bathrooms and drinking water during lock-in, was posted in the hall.

Room Labels

- All resident rooms were properly labeled in the hall.

Red Lights over Room Doors

- The red indicator lights were operable in the hall.

DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook in Hall

- The hall had a DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook.

DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbooks – Manual Review

A portion of the audit was conducted through a manual review of the DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbooks located in the halls on the four (4) audit dates. Listed below are the audit findings based on a manual review of the DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbooks on each of the dates audited.

May 4th

Complete and Accurate Logbook Recordings, Access Afforded in Five (5) Minutes

On this audit date, residents were in Halls 5 and 7. In both halls, staff properly recorded all the required DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook information, and based on these halls’ logbooks, residents were consistently afforded access to the bathrooms and/or drinking water within five (5) minutes, in compliance with the variance conditions.

Total Logbook Entries

The following was the total number of logbook entries regarding access to bathrooms and/or drinking water recorded for each hall on this audit date:

Hall 5 – Two (2) entries

Hall 7 – Three (3) entries

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May 12th

Complete and Accurate Logbook Recordings, Access Afforded in Five (5) Minutes

On this audit date, residents were in Halls 5 and 7. In both halls, staff properly recorded all the required DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook information, and based on these halls’ logbooks, residents were consistently afforded access to the bathrooms and/or drinking water within five (5) minutes, in compliance with the variance conditions.

Total Logbook Entries

The following was the total number of logbook entries regarding access to bathrooms and/or drinking water recorded for each hall on this audit date:

- Hall 5 – Two (2) entries
- Hall 7 – One (1) entry

May 18th

Complete and Accurate Logbook Recordings, Access Afforded in Five (5) Minutes

On this audit date, there were two remaining residents that were placed in Hall 7. One May 14th, one of the three residents was released. In this hall, the logbook was noted to have staff properly recorded all the required DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook information, and based on this hall’s logbook, residents were consistently afforded access to the bathrooms and/or drinking water within five (5) minutes, in compliance with the variance conditions.

Total Logbook Entries

The following was the total number of logbook entries regarding access to bathrooms and/or drinking water recorded for each hall on this audit date:

- Hall 7 – Three (3) entries

May 26th

Complete and Accurate Logbook Recordings, Access Afforded in Five (5) Minutes

On this audit date, there were two residents placed in Hall 7. In Hall 7, staff properly recorded all the required DYFJ Overnight Bathroom Logbook information, and based on these halls’ logbooks, residents were consistently afforded access to the bathrooms and/or drinking water within five (5) minutes, in compliance with the variance conditions.

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Total Logbook Entries

The following was the total number of logbook entries regarding access to bathrooms and/or drinking water recorded for each hall on this audit date:

Hall 7 – One (1) entry