

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families



As active members of the community, we share a vision that all children, youth and families

reach their fullest potential in a safe and nurturing environment

**ANNUAL REPORT OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND/OR SEXUAL
HARASSMENT WITHIN THE THOMAS C. SLATER TRAINING
SCHOOL FOR YOUTH, A COVERED FACILITY UNDER THE
FEDERAL PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION ACT (PREA)**

CALENDAR YEAR 2018

**ANNUAL REPORT OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND/OR SEXUAL HARASSMENT WITHIN RHODE ISLAND
JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES COVERED UNDER THE FEDERAL PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION
ACT (PREA)**

CALENDAR YEAR 2018

BACKGROUND

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was passed by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2003 to prevent, detect and respond to sexual abuse that occurs in confinement settings, including juvenile correctional programs. The National Prison Rape Elimination Commission developed national standards for reducing prison rape. These standards became final on June 20, 2012 when they were published in the Federal Register by the Department of Justice (DOJ). PREA applies to adult prisons and jails, juvenile confinement facilities, lockups and community confinement facilities. Juvenile facilities, whether a locked secure facility or a community-based facility, are required to meet the same Juvenile Facility Standards.

DATA COLLECTION AND CONSISTENCY

The Department is required to complete the annual *Survey of Sexual Victimization* administered by the Census Bureau of the US Department of Commerce on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the US Department of Justice. Instructions and the annual survey format are usually issued by the Census Bureau in July of the year following the reporting year (e.g., instructions/survey format for Calendar Year 2018 are issued usually in July 2019 with a deadline of the end of September) with a deadline of the end of September. As of the writing of this report, the Census Bureau has not yet released instructions for Calendar Year 2018.

In order to ensure consistency of reporting sexual victimization data as required PREA Juvenile Standard 115.387, the Department uses the annual *Survey of Sexual Victimization* as the annual data collection tool for PREA. Since that data is reported on a calendar year basis for a previous calendar year, the annual report is always focused on that previous calendar year's data. Since the Census Bureau has not yet released the 2018 Calendar Year instructions, any data included in this report for Calendar Year 2018 shall be considered preliminary.

COVERED FACILITIES

In 2018, Rhode Island had two (2) facilities required to meet the PREA Standards for Juvenile Facilities. One of these is the Thomas C. Slater Training School for Youth, the State's only publicly operated commitment program for both detained and adjudicated male and female youth. The Thomas C. Slater Training School for Youth (RITS) is the State's only locked, secure residential program for both adjudicated and pre-adjudicated male and female youth. The RITS is organized into four Mods each with the capacity to hold up to 24 youth: B Mod, Adjudicated Males; C Mod, Pre-Adjudicated (Detained) and Adjudicated Females; D Mod, Adjudicated Males; and F Mod, Pre-Adjudicated (Detained) Males. While the total capacity is 96 youth, the actual number of resident's averages about 55 youth daily.

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Ocean Tides, Inc. is a privately-operated staff secure program licensed by the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). Ocean Tides provides comprehensive residential treatment and educational services to youth adjudicated to the Training School, but who are ordered to these programs on a Temporary Community Placement (TCP) status by the Rhode Island Family Court. If the youth does not abide by the terms of the placement, the youth can be returned to the Training School without the need for the Court to issue a new placement order. Ocean Tides provides a separate annual report for PREA.

AGENCY AND FACILITY LEADERSHIP

Effective implementation of PREA and ensuring environments free of sexual abuse and sexual harassment is contingent on strong agency and facility leadership as well as the development of strong policies and practices that reinforce the prevention of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Under the leadership of Director Trista Piccola, Rhode Island continues our strong track record of ensuring safe facilities for detained and adjudicated youth in juvenile corrections facilities.

Due to the ongoing Department's ongoing collaboration with other private agencies and the Family Court, we have successfully continued to reduce the number of youth that are detained and adjudicated within the training school.

Similarly, Ocean Tides stresses the importance of effective staff training, sound youth assessments, and transition planning within their program's culture. Ocean Tides is a long-standing residential treatment facility in Rhode Island and enjoys an excellent reputation for providing safe and effective treatment and educational services to the youth in their care.

Audit Cycle 1 PREA Audits for both facilities were conducted in 2016, with the on-site phase held in May 2016. Both facilities began their initial PREA Audit for Juvenile Facilities in late 2015 with the onsite phase of the audits held in May 2016 and the preliminary report provided to the facilities in early June 2016. Corrective Action plans for each facility were initiated in late June 2016 and completed in early December 2016. The Final Reports issued in January 2017 indicated full compliance with PREA.

DCYF SPAN OF AUTHORITY

DCYF is the state agency designated as responsible for child welfare services (including child protective services), juvenile justice services, and children's behavioral health services. Under this authority, the services we provide the state include the operations of the Thomas C. Slater Training School for Youth. We are also the regulatory agency responsible for the licensing of residential services for children, youth, and foster homes.

This unique structure has allowed us to ensure that all Divisions, including Juvenile Correctional Services, are keenly aware of the importance of ensuring that the environments in which children and youth are placed have a zero tolerance for sexual harassment and sexual abuse. Staff, contractors, volunteers, and youth are continuously informed and educated about the importance of

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sharing information of suspected incidents of sexual harassment and abuse, how to know the signs of potential situations where this could arise and how to report suspicions or incidents.

*ANNUAL REPORTS ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL
VICTIMIZATION*

The Department submits the annual *Survey of Sexual Victimization* for the Thomas C. Slater Training School only. Since the other two facilities are privately operated, they submit these reports only when included in the random sample of private facilities. The Department has submitted *Surveys* for Calendar Years 2012 - 2017. Instructions and the survey instrument for Calendar Year 2018 have not yet been issued by the Census Bureau.

Except for Calendar Years 2015 and 2016, there were no reports of incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault of Training School residents by other youth or by staff, contractors, or volunteers. In CY 2015, there was one report of sexual harassment of a resident by a staff member. This report was investigated as a report of sexual abuse and was determined to be unfounded. The reports in 2016 and 2017, both allegations of staff on staff sexual abuse, were unfounded.

Reports of Allegations of Sexual Abuse/Harassment and Indicated Findings at Rhode Island's Thomas C. Slater Training School for Youth						
Year	Youth-to-Youth Sexual Harassment		Youth to Youth Sexual Assault¹		Staff to Youth Sexual Abuse/Assault²	
Year	Allegations	Indicated	Allegations	Indicated	Allegations	Indicated
2012	0	0	0	0	0	0
2013	0	0	0	0	0	0
2014	0	0	0	0	0	0
2015	0	0	0	0	1	0
2016	0	0	0	0	1	0
2017	0	0	0	0	1	0
2018	0	0	0	0	0	0

The Department engaged the technical assistance services of Bernadette Brown, a subject matter expert regarding working with LGBTQ individuals within correctional facilities, through the PREA Resource Center in early 2018. Based on this training and the assessment of our training materials,

¹ DCYF treats any alleged sexual acts between youth in the Training School as an allegation of sexual abuse and investigates such acts in accordance with our policies related to the investigation of sexual abuse.

² Rhode Island treats any act of alleged sexual harassment by staff/contactors/volunteers within the Training School as allegations of sexual abuse and investigates such acts in accordance with our policies related to investigations of sexual abuse.

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our policies and our Victim Aggressor Assessment Tool/Process, the Department updated our training materials, policies and our intake process as well as our Victim Aggressor assessment. Ocean Tides did the same with their policies and processes. As we use the same Victim Aggressor Assessment Tool for both facilities, both the Ocean Tides and the RITS implemented the revised tool.

The RI Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) conducted a mock PREA audit at the Thomas C. Slater Training School from November 13, 2018 – November 16, 2018. This provided us with an opportunity to identify key strengths and areas of continuous improvement. Given the significant changes within the administrative staff of the Training School since the last audit, this was an extremely beneficial exercise.

As we move forward with ongoing PREA compliance, the Department continues to examine our policies and practices to ensure that we continue our successful record of zero-tolerance for sexual harassment and assault. While we do not contract with any agencies for a set number of juvenile justice beds, we contract for the delivery of educational services with Ocean Tides. Since this facility serves juvenile justice-involved youth almost exclusively, we work with them to ensure PREA compliance. We have included language in all of our residential vendor contracts that provides notice to the vendor that, should they be determined to be a PREA Covered Facility, then they will be required to ensure they meet PREA standards.

Rhode Island has a strong history of protecting children and youth in care from sexual assault and harassments in all facilities operated or licensed by DCYF. We have found the efforts to comply with PREA complementary to our efforts to maintain zero tolerance in these areas and look forward to continued success.