

**State of Rhode Island**

***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*

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**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 2021**

**ACTING DIRECTOR KEVIN J. AUCOIN**

**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 2021**

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***BACKGROUND***

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Congress passed, and President George W. Bush signed, the in 2003. PREA is designed to prevent, detect and respond to sexual abuse that in confinement settings, including juvenile correctional programs. The National Prison Rape Elimination Commission developed national standards for reducing prison rape. The US Department of Justice (DOJ) published PREA standards on June 20, 2012. PREA applies to adult prisons and jails, juvenile confinement facilities, lockups and community confinement facilities. The Juvenile Facility Standards define expectations for locked secure and community-based juvenile facilities when more than half of the youth in a facility on an annual basis are involved with the Juvenile Justice System either through pre-trial detention or adjudication.

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***DATA COLLECTION AND CONSISTENCY***

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The DOJ annually requires the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to complete the annual *Survey of Sexual Victimization (SSV)* administered by the Census Bureau of the US Department of Commerce. DCYF uses the results of the SSV as the annual data collection tool for PREA as required by PREA Juvenile Facility Standard 115.387. Data is reported on a Calendar Year basis. This report covers the SSV for Calendar Year 2021.

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***COVERED FACILITIES***

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In 2021, two facilities met the definition of *covered facility* within the PREA Standards for Juvenile Facilities. One of these is the Thomas C. Slater Training School for 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, between 35-50 youth are residents of the RITS on any given day.

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. Youth who do not follow the terms of the placement can be sent back to the RITS without further Family Court approval. Between 25-35 youth are placed at Ocean Tides on any given day.

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*AGENCY AND FACILITY LEADERSHIP*

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Effective implementation of PREA and ensuring environments free of sexual abuse and sexual harassment is contingent on strong agency and facility leadership. The development and implementation of strong policies and practices reinforce the prevention of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Under the leadership of successive Directors and current Acting Director Kevin Aucoin, Rhode Island continues our strong track record of ensuring safe facilities for detained and adjudicated youth in juvenile corrections facilities. One initiative that has helped to ensure client safety has been through the addition of digital video monitoring in all public areas of the RITS as well as each of the residential units.

Due to the Department's ongoing collaboration with other private agencies and the Family Court, we have successfully continued to reduce the number of youth detained and adjudicated at the RITS and provided them services in their communities. In CY 2017 there were 419 admissions to the RITS while in CY 2021 there were 199 admissions. This represents a continued annual decrease in admissions, and a 52.5 % change decrease in the number of youth admissions.

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 which 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.

Audit Cycle 2 PREA Audits commenced in April 2019 with the on-site phase held in June 2019. Final Audit reports for each facility were received in early August 2019 with no corrective actions required.

Audit Cycle 3 PREA Audits began with the Pre-Audit phase in the Fall of 2019. While both facilities were scheduled for their onsite audit phases for March 2020, we were only able to complete the RITS on-site Audit in March before all programs were locked down due to COVID-19. We were able to have the Ocean Tides on-side audit conducted in July 2020 during a the brief reduction in COVID-19 that summer. Both facilities received final reports with no corrective actions needed in by early August 2020.

DCYF anticipates conducting Audit Cycle 4 audits of all facilities within Year 1 (August 20, 2022-August 19, 2023).

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***DCYF SPAN OF AUTHORITY***

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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 include the operations of the Thomas C. Slater Training School for Youth. DCYF is also the regulatory agency responsible for the licensing of residential services for children, youth, and foster homes.

This unique structure allows us to ensure that all Divisions, including Youth Development Services (YDS), are keenly aware of the importance of ensuring that foster home, licensed residential programs and the RITS have a zero tolerance for sexual harassment and sexual abuse. We continuously inform and educated Staff, contractors, volunteers, and youth about the importance of sharing information of suspected incidents of sexual harassment and abuse, knowing how to identify potential situations of sexual harassment and/or abuse and how to report suspicions or incidents.

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***ANNUAL REPORTS ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL  
VICTIMIZATION***

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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 - 2021.

Incidents of sexual harassment or sexual assault of Training School residents were reported in Calendar Years 2015, 2016, 2019 and 2021. 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. In 2019, there were 6 reports of allegations of youth-to-youth sexual harassment and in 2021 there were 4 reports of youth-to-youth sexual harassments. The determinations on each was that the allegations were unfounded. In 2019 and separately in 2021, there was one allegation in each year of staff-to-youth sexual abuse made which also were unfounded after investigation.

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<b>Reports of Allegations of Sexual Abuse/Harassment and Indicated Findings at Rhode Island's Thomas C. Slater Training School for Youth</b>						
<b>Year</b>	<b>Youth-to-Youth Sexual Harassment</b>		<b>Youth to Youth Sexual Assault<sup>1</sup></b>		<b>Staff to Youth Sexual Abuse/Assault<sup>2</sup></b>	
<b>Year</b>	<b>Allegations</b>	<b>Substantiated</b>	<b>Allegations</b>	<b>Substantiated</b>	<b>Allegations</b>	<b>Substantiated</b>
<b>2012</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>2013</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>2014</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>2015</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>2016</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>2017</b>	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>2018</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>2019</b>	6	0	0	0	1	0
<b>2020</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>2021</b>	4	0	0	0	1	0

The RITS Training Coordinator continues to publish monthly PREA Newsletter that is shared among RITS staff and Ocean Tides. This newsletter focuses each month on a specific PREA standard to highlight the expectations of that standard.

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.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.