

**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 2023**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LAROME MYRICK, PHD**

**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 2023**

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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 what will be reported in the SSV for Calendar Year 2023. However, that does not become available to us to enter the data until later this year.

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***COVERED FACILITIES***

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In 2023, three 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 of 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 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.

Community Solutions, Inc.'s Coventry RI (CSI) program was added to the covered facilities for Rhode Island as of the beginning of Audit Cycle 4. CSI is an 8-bed staff secure group home. DCYF

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places youth who are in the care and custody of the State for child welfare reasons as well as youth who are adjudicated through the Juvenile Calendar of the RI Family Court. Youth receive treatment services both at the site and through community providers. The local school district operates a transitional classroom onsite with the intent to move residents into attending the local public school as soon as possible. Some youth also attend the school they had attended prior to placement at CSI. Youth access activities in the community as well.

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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 Director Ashley Deckert and the Executive Director Dr. Larome Myrick, Rhode Island continues our strong track record of ensuring safe facilities for detained and adjudicated youth in juvenile corrections facilities.

The Department continues its collaboration with community-based private agencies and the Family Court, successfully maintaining a reduced number of youths detained and adjudicated at the RITS. In CY2023 there were 241 admissions and 246 discharges. Admission numbers are relatively consistent with CY2022 (232) and remain well under admission numbers pre-COVID.

Site 2: Ocean Tides is a Lasallian school and residential program that is committed to providing a challenging, safe and healthy learning environment designed to meet the social, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual needs of each youth. 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.

Site 3: Community Solutions, Inc. – Coventry (CSI) is an 8-bed staff secure group home for justice involved youth. DCYF places youth who are in the care and custody of the State for child welfare reasons as well as youth who are adjudicated by the Juvenile Calendar of the RI Family Court. Youth receive treatment services both at the site and through community providers. The local school district operates a transitional classroom onsite with the intent to move residents into attending the local public school as soon as possible. Some youth also attend the school they had attended prior to placement at CSI. Youth access activities in the community as well.

Audit Cycle 1 PREA Audits for both the Training School and Ocean Tides were conducted in 2016, with the on-site phase held in May 2016. These two 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 the Training School and Ocean Tides were received in early August 2019 with no corrective actions required.

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Audit Cycle 3 PREA Audits began with the Pre-Audit phase in the Fall of 2019. While the Training School and Ocean Tides 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.

Audit Cycle 4 PREA Audits commenced in March 2023 with the onsite phase held for all 3 facilities during the week of March 27, 2023. Final Audit reports for the Training School, Ocean Tides and CSI were received in early May 2023 with no corrective actions required.

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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 the Division of Youth Development (DYD), 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 educate staff, contractors, volunteers, and youth about the importance of sharing information of suspected incidents of sexual harassment and sexual abuse, knowing how to identify potential situations of sexual harassment and/or sexual abuse and how to report suspicions or incidents.

All residential programs licensed by DCYF, including Ocean Tides and CSI, are required by law and state regulations to follow the child abuse and neglect reporting requirements of state law and DCYF policies and procedures. This includes the reporting of all allegations of sexual abuse (inclusive of allegations of sexual harassment by any program staff, contractors, or volunteers against a resident of a program) to the State’s Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline staffed by trained Child Protection Investigators (CPIs). The CPI receiving the report determines the time frame for investigation and ensures it is assigned to a field CPI. For the Training School and all residential programs, the Department has two identified CPIs who conduct all child abuse/neglect investigations. The assigned CPI conducts the investigations and makes a determination as to whether or not to indicate the allegation for abuse or neglect in consultation with their supervisor and/or administrator. If law enforcement need to be brought in for a criminal investigation, the residential program will contact the local police department while the Training School uses the Rhode Island State Police.

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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.

Routine meetings are held at the RI Training School with the PREA Compliance Managers, the DCYF PREA Coordinator, the Training School Superintendent, and the Executive Director of Youth Development to review the internal practices related to effective implementation of PREA, identify areas of improvement needed and address those areas of improvement as well as celebrate successes.

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 harassment. 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. In 2022 a youth-to-youth allegation was made by a staff based on a survey completed by a youth where the youth had allegedly indicated sexual contact by another resident. However, when investigated, the youth denied submitting the survey and indicated another youth had put his name on it. He denied any such incident.

In CY2023, there were two allegations of sexual abuse/assault by a staff member towards youth. Both allegations were reported on PREA surveys. Both allegations were reported to DCYF Child Protective Services (CPS) by the PREA coordinator. Both allegations were determined Unfounded by CPS.

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.

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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
<b>2022</b>	0	0	1	0	0	0
<b>2023</b>	0	0	0	0	2	0

Rhode Island has a strong history of protecting children and youth in care from sexual abuse and sexual harassment 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.