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DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
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RANDALL A. LIBERTY
COMMISSIONER

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PRESS RELEASE

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Maine Department of Corrections Announces Actions Following Incidents at Long Creek Youth Development Center

The Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) today announced several actions it has undertaken at Long Creek Youth Development Center (LCYDC), the state's sole juvenile correctional facility in South Portland, to protect the safety, health, and wellbeing of both residents and staff following five incidents between residents and staff over the past two months.

The incidents – which occurred on August 2, August 9, August 30, September 11, and September 13 – involved altercations between residents and staff after residents in the facility acted in a manner that posed a serious danger to themselves, other residents, and LCYDC staff, including, in some cases, throwing furniture into windows, breaking furniture apart to use as weapons, assaulting other residents and staff, flooding the residence hall resulting in destruction of property which is estimated to exceed \$100,000 at this point, and refusing to cooperate with de-escalation tactics. In some cases where staff efforts at de-escalation were unsuccessful, staff members intervened to restore order and because of these efforts, there was no serious bodily injury.

The timeframe during which the incidents occurred also saw a near-doubling of the resident population at LCYDC, with population in the 20s in the summer to 41 this month, along with a marked increase in residents who are considered “high-risk” because they have a higher level of acuity. Acuity is the level of risk that a resident presents to public safety and is a measure of aggressive or criminogenic behavior combined with the need for behavioral intervention or mental health services. A resident is considered high-risk if they have been charged with crimes such as arson, criminal threatening with a weapon, gross sexual assault, robbery, or aggravated assault, and those residents are placed in specific programming and housing.

On August 2, the date of the first incident, 23 of the total 33 residents at LCYDC were considered high-risk. By September 13, the date of the most recent incident, the total population of residents had grown to 41 with 34, or more than 80 percent, considered high risk. Residents are placed in LCYDC following adjudication through the state's court system, which recently reopened, and a decision from a judge, which often involves a determination that the resident poses a threat to public safety if not placed at LCYDC.

Both the underlying incidents and the response of staff to those incidents are the subject of ongoing investigation by the Department of Corrections and Cumberland County District Attorney's Office. Any actions taken by staff that are not in line with the Department's protocols will not be tolerated.

While the investigation continues, the Department today is announcing a separate comprehensive departmental review of the practices, policies, and operations at the facility. For this effort, the Department is partnering with the Center for Children's Law and Policy (CCLP), a national public interest law and policy organization focused on reform of juvenile justice systems and the protection of the rights of children in those systems.

The Department is also planning to modify housing units, pursue design changes to improve the facility's environment, add more behavioral health clinicians with specializations in behavioral treatments for juveniles with aggressive tendencies, and bolster its efforts to move youth who are waiting placement to Intensive Temporary Residential Treatment (ITRT).

The Department has also implemented retraining of staff specific to the management of mass demonstrations/disturbances, including the use of force after de-escalation tactics fail, and how to respond to staff injuries.

"The health, safety, and wellbeing of both residents in our care at Long Creek and the staff at the facility are our highest priority," **said Maine Department of Corrections Commissioner Randy Liberty**. "The increase in incidents at the facility is troubling and is indicative of the challenges that the Department faces in trying to provide rehabilitation opportunities for our residents. At the same time, while we have seen an increase in higher-risk residents of the past several months, it is imperative that everything we do as stewards of their care honors our department's commitment to protecting their safety and that of our staff. I believe the reforms we are instituting, along with the review we have undertaken with the Center for Children's Law and Policy and our ongoing efforts to reform the juvenile justice system and expand services, will help move us in that direction. The fact remains that the judicial system in Maine charges Long Creek with the care of residents who pose a serious risk to public safety, and it is our responsibility to pursue rehabilitative efforts while protecting their safety and that of our staff."

To advance these initiatives, Department Commissioner Randy Liberty has also named Amanda Woolford as the Acting Superintendent of LCYDC. Ms. Woolford, who has been with the Department since 2006, is currently the Director of Women's Services for the MDOC, a position she has held since 2012.

Prior to her work with the women's population, Ms. Woolford spent five years working in juvenile community corrections. Ms. Woolford has her M.S. in Criminal Justice from Boston University and her B.S. in Criminology from Northeastern University.

Of the temporary appointment, **Commissioner Liberty said**, "With her 15 years of correctional and case management experience, her knowledge of juvenile services and national best practices, I am confident Amanda will effectively guide the facility during this time. Her passion and training in gender-responsive and trauma-informed approach to rehabilitation is second to none. Ms. Woolford is part of the solution."

"I've meet with the team at LCYDC," **Woolford said**. "While we have experienced challenges over the past two months, I know this is a group of people who are dedicated to having a positive impact on young people. We will do all we can to implement these reforms expeditiously and make sure that we are meeting our commitment to our residents and staff."

Woolford replaces Caroline Raymond, who had been the Superintendent since October 2017, and submitted her resignation this week. Associate Commissioner of Juvenile Services, Colin O'Neill has also submitted his resignation.



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The Department's commitment to ensuring that all residents experience a fair, equitable, and responsive juvenile justice system that provides them with supportive care, nurturing environment, and appropriate services to ensure positive outcomes remains at the forefront of every review, investigation, and decision.

The Department, in partnership with organizations such as the CCLP, is also continuing to implement juvenile justice reforms passed through the budget during the 130th Legislature, including identifying community-based secure residences for juveniles that will help reduce the use of institutional confinement when a less restrictive residence is appropriate. Collaboration and open communication between child serving agencies also remains an important reform to juvenile justice that the department is actively pursuing.

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