



STATE OF MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT

**CHARLES H. HICKEY, JR. SCHOOL
SPECIAL REPORT**

DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES RESPONSE

KEY FINDINGS

Multiple security breakdowns contributed to the escape as discussed below:

a. **Staff failure to maintain appropriate direct care supervision of youth**

Persons interviewed said that while the youth were in the van at the medical satellite facility, one staff was apparently asleep and the other staff was just sitting in the driver's side, not paying any attention. The youth exited the van through the rear doors.

Although the staff did not maintain the appropriate supervision on the youth there is no indication he was sleep. This is supported in one of the youth's statement. The OIA investigation sustained for not maintaining supervision of youth and both staff were terminated.

b. **Failure to secure gates on the east side of campus**

The youth reportedly left the campus on the east side by the same gates that were referred to as problematic in the investigation of the escape on January 13, 2007. (See 1st Quarter Individual Facility Report on Charles H. Hickey, Jr. School at p. 12). Although the gates had padlocks attached, they had been forcibly pushed open so often that the locks were useless. This condition was also noted in our 1st Quarter Individual Facility Report.

The fence has since been adjusted to address a gap between the gate and fence that allowed some flexibility which compromised the integrity of the fence.

c. **Failure of fence alarm system and/or failure of security staff to properly monitor the fence and alarm**

The fence alarm was reportedly activated several hours prior to the escape but there was no response to that particular alarm due to the habitual use of the gates by staff traveling between the east and west campuses. The alarm was again activated at 8:02 PM and a response from the Watkins Security officer revealed that the gates and fence were apparently secure, so no further action was taken. Apparently, the youth had closed the gates behind themselves, after making the escape, and they appeared secure.

DJS responded to the escape by terminating the contract of the private firm it hired in 2006 to provide security services at Hickey. The justification for hiring the private firm less than a year ago was that DJS internal security staff were unable to secure the campus and an outside professional firm could do a better job.

While it may be that the contract termination was justified, DJS will need a strong plan in place before beginning to use its own staff to secure the campus. Past efforts to use DJS staff in security roles were not successful.

DJS has moved very aggressively forward with assuming the security functions of the gatehouse. We have developed policies and procedures around the functions such as perimeter checks, vehicle searches, and visitor searches.

d. [Failure of the community notification system](#)

Despite guarantees that the community notification system issue had been corrected, the system malfunctioned once again, failing to notify about half of Hickey's neighbors until the morning following the escape. According to investigative reports, during that time the youth broke into a home in the neighborhood and stole a van.

Yes, there were problems initially with the system, however, we have since conducted a test on October 12, 2007 at 10:25am that was very successful. We will be testing the system quarterly to ensure proper functioning and updating of new community members.

e. [Lack of electronic video surveillance equipment](#)

JJMU has also called repeatedly for the installation of video surveillance cameras at Hickey. DJS has rejected that recommendation as cost prohibitive, and it is our understanding that the General Assembly has cut this item from DJS' budget request in each of the past few legislative sessions.