



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Avery D. Niles, Commissioner

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INVESTIGATORS PROBE ANOTHER JUVENILE ASSAULT AT AUGUSTA YDC COMMISSIONER DEMANDS TO KNOW WHY YOUTH INJURY REPORT WAS DELAYED

(Augusta YDC) Today DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles announced that a recent youth-on-youth serious injury at the Augusta YDC went unreported to the state's juvenile justice Central Office in Decatur for several days last month, prompting the Commissioner to make a formal request for the GBI to help widen their investigation at the YDC.

"Whether it was an avoidable clerical error or a sloppy oversight, it's another example of the unacceptable level of safety and security deficiencies the public has come to associate with the management of the Augusta Youth Development Campus," said Commissioner Avery Niles.

"But between the joint GBI-DJJ investigation going on here now and the personnel changes I have planned, I want to see some major upgrades in performance in the months to come," said Commissioner Niles. "Failure to report youth injuries and disturbances will not be tolerated on my watch. I expect management and oversight to greatly improve all aspects of administration at the Augusta YDC," said Niles.

The Commissioner said a November fourth disturbance involving five Augusta detainees sent a seventeen year old to the hospital with a broken jaw. YDC records show the jaw injury was not evident during the injured youth's initial medical examinations. But a few days later, when his symptoms did not improve, alert YDC medical staff referred the injured youth to a hospital where a new evaluation revealed he had a jaw fracture which had to be wired shut.

"That medical report never made it to my office and no one picked up the phone from the Augusta YDC to inform me or my investigators about the injury," said Commissioner Niles. The Commissioner said his internal affairs officers learned about that injured youth while on-site to investigate another detainee fight injury on December 2nd. That situation immediately prompted him to call in the Georgia Bureau of Investigation for assistance.

"That's why we locked down the campus and ordered so many precautionary measures like the Security Management Response Team (SMRT-Team) into effect," said Commissioner Avery.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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A team of GBI agents was assigned to conduct the criminal investigation and to maintain agency transparency in the case. DJJ has taken out aggravated assault charges on three of the YDC residents involved in the attack on the 17 year old youth. A fourth has been charged as a juvenile.

“Any detainees who commit this kind of youth on youth violence in our facilities will face serious additional charges and prosecution,” said Commissioner Niles.

The investigation is expected to continue at the Augusta YDC for several weeks. Commissioner Niles has publicly announced plans to name a new full time Director for the secure facility before the end of this month.

(END RELEASE)