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Monitoring Visit to Vienna Correctional Center 9/27/2011

The John Howard Association (JHA) visited Vienna Correctional Center (Vienna) on September 27, 2011. It is a male minimum-security prison located in Vienna, Illinois about six hours south of Chicago.



Vital Statistics:

Population: 1,616
Rated Capacity: 685
Average Annual Cost Per Inmate: \$20,714
Average Age: 35
Source: DOC, 12/19/2011

Key Observations

- As of December 19, 2011, Vienna is Illinois' most overcrowded prison. It is designed to hold 685 inmates, but houses more than 1,600, which makes it about 240 percent over its design capacity.
- Most of Vienna's inmates serve less than one year at the facility.
- If Governor Quinn restored Meritorious Good Time, the early-release program he suspended in late 2009, Vienna could potentially empty its most overcrowded, dilapidated housing areas.
- At the time of JHA's visit in September 2011, Vienna had only one mental health professional to meet the needs of more than 1,600 inmates.
- Approximately 12 percent of Vienna's population is 50 or older. The racial-ethnic makeup of Vienna's population is roughly 67 percent African American, 21 percent White, 11 percent Hispanic, and approximately 1 percent Native American and Asian combined.

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Executive Summary

On September 27, 2011, JHA visited Vienna Correctional Center (Vienna). Vienna is a Level Six minimum-security adult male facility that houses mostly low-level offenders. It also operates Dixon Springs-Impact Incarceration Program (IIP), a co-ed boot camp. Located on the fringes of Shawnee National Forest and adjacent to Shawnee Correctional Center, a male minimum-security prison, Vienna is about 350 miles south of Chicago and 170 miles west of Nashville, Tennessee.

Vienna represents the best of what Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) can be and the worst of what it has become through a lack of vital resources and severe overcrowding.

For most of its more than 40-year history, Vienna was widely regarded as Illinois' most successful and innovative prison. It was designed to function as a small town where inmates could learn how to become responsible citizens. Until a little over 10 years ago, the facility did not have a fence, and inmates did not wear uniforms.

Education was critical to Vienna's rehabilitative mission. The prison's education and vocational program rivaled—and in some cases surpassed—the area's best technical high schools and post-secondary institutions. In fact, Vienna's programming was so good that local area residents took classes in the prison with inmates.

During this period, Vienna embodied a mutually beneficial relationship between prison and community that went far beyond the typical economic support prisons provide to their local economies. Up until the mid 1990s, Vienna inmates volunteered in the local community, umpired baseball games on weekends, and even ran an Emergency Technician Program, which supplied the surrounding area with a 24-hour ambulance service staffed by specially trained inmates.

Today Vienna has gone from being Illinois' most innovative and successful prison to its most overcrowded. Although the facility was designed to hold 685 inmates, it now houses more than 1,600 people. Years of neglect and lack of essential maintenance and upkeep have made these conditions worse, as mostly low-level offenders are crammed into dilapidated buildings infested with mice and cockroaches.

While Vienna's staff and administration are acutely aware of the problems they face, they believe if given the appropriate resources they could turn the facility around. They point to current renovations, which include a desperately needed re-roofing project. They also note how last spring, when the region faced some of the worst flooding it has ever seen,

inmates and staff volunteered and helped prepare more than 400,000 sandbags, which saved countless homes and buildings from serious damage.

At JHA's meeting with Vienna's administration, a senior member aptly described the current state of the facility: "Vienna is a good place with a proud history in need of help." Most urgently, Vienna needs the help of the governor and the legislature to enact legislation and support programs that will safely reduce the state's prison population, which has reached almost 50,000 inmates, a record high. In particular, Illinois needs to find more cost-effective alternatives to incarceration for low-level, non-violent offenders who have swelled minimum-security prisons like Vienna at great cost and little benefit to taxpayers.

With a reduction in population, DOC could return Vienna to a model, re-entry prison that inmates could earn their way into through good behavior. This proposal is based not on liberal or conservative approaches to crime, but on cost-effective use of tax dollars and state resources. Ultimately, the choice for elected officials is not whether to spend money on its prison system. It is whether to put money into smart re-entry programming or an endless cycle of re-incarceration.

Recommendations:

- (1) The Illinois Governor and General Assembly must reduce the prison population through sentencing reform, enact a safe replacement for Meritorious Good Time, and provide Vienna and other DOC facilities with the funding and staffing needed to meet the population's basic medical and mental health needs. If such action is not taken, it is all but inevitable that this issue will end up being litigated in the courts.
- (2) Assuming elected officials find ways to safely reduce the state's prison population, DOC should consider investing in Vienna and making it into a premiere re-entry prison which inmates must earn their way into.
- (3) As soon as it can feasibly do so, Vienna's administration should remove inmates from the second and third floor of Building 19, the prison's most decrepit, overcrowded living quarters.
- (4) Vienna should consider using the segregation bullpen to house inmates only for short periods of time due to the fact that it is unfit for long-term living.
- (5) To address the needs of its population, Vienna needs more mental health staff.
- (6) DOC and Vienna should continue its efforts to rehab the facility.
- (7) As recent studies have shown that prison visits reduce inmates' likelihood of recidivating, Vienna should improve its visiting area, making it more child and family friendly.

Introduction

This report examines the following issues: Vienna: Past and Present; Housing and Living Conditions; Segregation; Physical and Mental Health; Staffing & Inmate Programming; Visiting Area; and Population Demographics.

Vienna: Past & Present

It is impossible to understand Vienna today and its unrealized future potential without appreciating its unique past. Opened in 1965, Vienna was once widely regarded as the “most successful state prison in Illinois.”¹ The facility was designed as if it were a small town, complete with a fishing pond, athletic fields, and dorms for which inmates had their own keys. For the first three decades of its existence, the facility did not have a fence, and for a short period, the prison was co-ed. As one study from the 1970s put it, Vienna “approaches the quality of [a] non-penal institution. Buildings resembling garden apartments are built around a ‘town square’ complete with churches, schools, shops, and library. Paths lead off to ‘neighborhoods’ where ‘homes’ provide private rooms in small clusters.”²

The idea behind this design was to provide a rehabilitative environment for inmates to learn how to become responsible citizens. Education was key to this mission. The prison was known for its programs, which “equal[ed] or surpass[ed] those of many technical high schools.”³ Until the mid 1990s, the prison offered classes not only to its inmates, but also to citizens of the surrounding communities, who would come to the facility to take evening college classes and participate in daytime vocational programs.

Vienna blurred the boundaries between prison and the surrounding community. Of course, like most prisons, the facility employed a significant number of local residents and helped support the local economy. More surprisingly, inmates would umpire local baseball games and volunteer for community projects. The prison even ran a program called the Emergency Technician Program, which was an “ambulance service manned by eighteen trained inmates working twenty-four-hour shifts.”⁴

In Vienna’s early days, Illinois’ prison system was a different place than it is now. For most of the 1970s, Illinois prisons held less than 10,000 people. Through multiple factors—including the war on drugs, the war on crime, and the de-institutionalization of

¹ James B. Jacobs, Notes on Policy and Practice, *Social Service Review* (December 1976) 623.

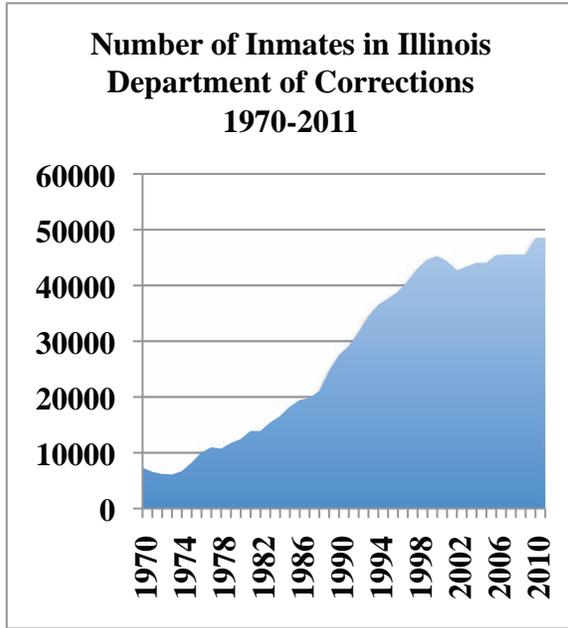
² Jacobs, Notes on Policy and Practice, 623.

³ National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals: Report on Corrections (Washington, D.C.: 1973), 345.

⁴ Jacobs, 628.

mental health— that number began to steadily increase.⁵ Today, Illinois has almost 50,000 people in its prisons, which is almost a 400 percent increase in four decades.

During this period of unprecedented growth in the prison population, the prison system became not only more crowded, but also more violent. As veteran DOC staff and inmates from the 1980s and early 1990s recall, gangs had almost complete control of prison operations. Assaults on inmates and staff were commonplace, and in some prisons, gang leaders were so powerful that they assigned new inmates to cells based on their gang affiliation.



Ultimately Illinois’ prison violence spilled into Vienna’s model correctional community. In 1993, inmates staged what the local state attorney called a “mini riot.” Shortly after that incident, an inmate sexually assaulted a correction officer and left her for dead. DOC officials soon erected a fence around the facility, citizens

stopped going into the prison for classes, and the prison’s inmate-run Emergency Technician Program was shuttered.⁶

These events effectively ended what the Chicago Tribune called Vienna’s “experiment with trust.” Around the same time, as the facility struggled to retain its programming focus, funding for prison education diminished. In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which, among other things, banned prisoners from using Pell Grants to pay for classes. As Illinois’ finances began to fail, governors and legislators found funding for prison education an attractive item to cut from the state’s budget.

Then, in 2002, Governor George Ryan proposed closing Vienna to cut the state’s budget. Although Governor Ryan eventually dropped the plan, state government seemed to abandon the prison and treat it as if it were a closed facility. Several critical administrative positions were left vacant for years. Essential upkeep and maintenance ceased, as requests for repairs were either ignored or never submitted.

When JHA visited Vienna in September of 2011, we found staff and a new administration trying to dig the facility out from years of neglect and disrepair. A couple

⁵ On the rise of prison population, see Heather Ann Thompson, *Why Mass Incarceration Matters*, *Journal of American History*, (December 2010), 703-734; and Mark Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate* (New Press, 2006).

⁶ “Model prison can no longer escape violence,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 22, 1996.

of months earlier, a housing unit had to be closed due to mold infestation. At the time of our visit, administration was trying to make the building inhabitable by tearing out the dry wall and fixing windows and shower areas. The administration noted that when they first arrived in April 2011, nearly every building had serious leak and rusting problems. During JHA's visit, Vienna's staff and administration described several on-going renovation projects, including a desperately needed re-roofing effort. They also noted how staff and inmates helped prepare more than 400,000 sandbags, a reminder of the partnership between prison and community that Vienna used to represent.

Despite the facility's disrepair, JHA believes that the staff and surrounding community are ready to restore Vienna to what it once was. For this to happen though, Illinois' elected officials first must stop wasting precious resources on imprisoning low-level, non-violent offenders who currently fill prisons like Vienna and instead continue to invest in safe and cost-effective alternatives to incarceration, like Adult Redeploy.⁷ This would not only help decrease Illinois' overcrowded prison system, but allow DOC to increase programming for inmates in all of its prisons. In so doing, DOC could learn from the lessons of Vienna's past and turn the facility into the state's premiere re-entry prison, an institution which inmates must earn their way into and which offers innovative educational and vocational programs to facilitate their successful return to free society. This proposal is based not on liberal or conservative approaches to crime, but on cost-effective use of tax dollars and state resources. Ultimately, the choice for elected officials is not whether to spend money on its prison system. It is whether to put money into smart re-entry programming or an endless cycle of re-incarceration.

Crowding

Vienna is Illinois' most crowded prison. It is designed to hold 685 inmates, but as of December 19, 2011, housed more than 1,600 people, making it almost 240 percent over its design capacity.

As of the publication of this report, Illinois has almost 50,000 people in its prison system, which is designed to hold about 33,000. Although Illinois' prison population has exceeded its design capacity for decades, the number of prisoners has increased by almost 10 percent since 2010. This sudden surge in the state's population is largely due Governor Pat Quinn's suspension of Meritorious Good Time (MGT), a 30-year-old, statute-based program that allowed inmates to earn as many as 180 days off their sentences.⁸

⁷ From Adult Redeploy's website: "Adult Redeploy Illinois was established by the Crime Reduction Act (Public Act 96-0761) to provide financial incentives to local jurisdictions for programs that allow diversion of non-violent offenders from state prisons by providing community-based services. Grants are provided to counties, groups of counties, and judicial circuits to increase programming in their areas, in exchange for reducing the number of people they send to the Illinois Department of Corrections." To learn more, go to <http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/redeploy/>.

⁸ Malcolm Young, "Setting the Record Straight: The Truth About 'Early Release,'" October 28, 2010.

As most inmates sentenced for violent offenses were ineligible for MGT, low-level offenders have been the most affected by its suspension. Consequently, while every prison struggles with the state's exploding inmate population, medium and minimum-security prisons, like Vienna, which overwhelmingly incarcerate low-level offenders serving short sentences, face the most severe overcrowding. For instance, one administrator JHA interviewed at Vienna noted that if the governor restored MGT, they could empty the most decrepit and overcrowded parts of the prison.

The overcrowding of Illinois' medium and minimum-security prisons can undermine security and proper functioning on multiple levels. As JHA noted in its 2011 report on the Northern Reception and Classification Center,

Average length of stay at Vienna (Reported 9/25/11)
12 months or less 53%
1-2 years 26%
3-4 years 21%

“administrators at several medium and minimum-security facilities independently have reported to JHA that, with the increased population, they have received a substantial influx of inmates poorly suited to be housed at their facilities because they present too great a security risk or have too severe mental health problems and treatment needs that the facilities are not designed to handle.”⁹

On JHA's visit to Vienna, we heard several examples of such classification problems. For instance, the administration noted they recently sent back an inmate to NRC on discovering that he had an outstanding warrant for murder. This is a problem because, as a minimum-security prison, Vienna allows a degree of freedom that an inmate facing a murder charge might use to escape. Another example: administration recently returned an inmate that had been sent to Vienna's boot camp, because boot camp requires participants to engage in strenuous exercise and activity and the inmate was so physically impaired that he could hardly walk. As described by one administrator, the inmate barely had the physical strength and capacity to get off the bus at Vienna, let alone participate in a boot camp.

On top of the classification problems, administration has no choice but to pack its living quarters and house prisoners in unsuitable living areas because Vienna has significantly more prisoners than it was designed to hold. This kind of crowding also stretches vital but limited resources, from programming to healthcare. These conditions frustrate rehabilitation efforts and create a dangerous environment for inmates to live and staff to work.

At JHA, we often hear in response to our work that prisoners deserve to live in these kinds of harsh conditions, and that doing so will teach them not to break the law. These assertions fail to appreciate two vital points. First, housing prisoners in overly harsh conditions hurts not only prisoners, but also public safety as it ends up costing taxpayers more money with increased crime and high recidivism rates. More than 90 percent of people who are sent to prison eventually are released, most after serving a short sentence.

⁹ See JHA Monitoring Report of Stateville Northern Reception & Classification Center, July 12, 2011, found at <http://www.thejha.org/NRC>.

For instance, most prisoners at Vienna serve less than one year before they are released. While there is no evidence to suggest that exposure to harsh and overcrowded conditions makes prisoners less likely to commit new crimes, there is strong evidence that it makes prisoners worse and more likely to re-offend when they are released.¹⁰

Second, harsh prison conditions can severely undermine prison security. Studies confirm that poor prison conditions correspond to significantly higher rates of violence and staff assaults.¹¹ In addition, such conditions have a profoundly damaging impact on the physical and mental well-being of staff, by increasing the potential for violence, escalating workload pressures and making it much more difficult for staff to monitor inmates and safely and effectively perform their jobs.¹² A long time Vienna correctional officer that JHA spoke with expressed the same opinion, and said that most correctional officers see overcrowding and lack of inmate programming to be serious security problems because they lead to more fights and staff assaults.

In short, packing prisons beyond their capacity and allowing prison conditions to deteriorate serves no one's interests—not inmates, not staff, and not the public.

Housing & Living Conditions

The layout of Vienna is organized around a town square concept, with a centrally located dining facility, library, chapel, commissary, barbershop and gymnasium. Six double-celled housing units are situated around the square and connected to each other by paths. From the outside, the units look extremely non-institutional, and resemble small apartment complexes more than prison housing. The presence of flowers and landscaping on the prison grounds adds to the residential feeling.

On our visit, JHA toured Building 1, a typical general population-housing unit. When we arrived, dozens of inmates crowded the building's dayroom, which consisted of a table on one side which inmates used to play cards and board games and a small television set mounted on the wall on the other side. JHA interviewed several inmates in Building 1, all of whom had similar complaints and observations about their living conditions. They

¹⁰ See M. Keith Chang, Yale University and Cowles Foundation, Jesse M. Sapiro, University of Chicago and NBER, *Do Harsh Prison Conditions Reduce Recidivism? A Discontinuity Based Approach*, available at http://faculty.som.yale.edu/keithchen/papers/Final_ALER07.pdf.

¹¹ See David M. Bierie, *Is Tougher Better? The Impact of Physical Prison Conditions On Inmate Violence*, International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology (April 13, 2011), available at <http://ijo.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/04/09/0306624X11405157.full.pdf>

¹² See David M. Bierie, *The Impact of Prison Conditions on Staff Well-Being*, International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology (November 30, 2010) available at <http://ijo.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/11/29/0306624X10388383.full.pdf+html>; Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, Executive Directives and Prison Violence (2005) available at http://www.prisoncommission.org/statements/thompkins_douglas.pdf.

noted the building had a significant cockroach problem. During JHA's interview with administration, the administration acknowledged that there were bugs, mice, and other "varmints" throughout the facility. The administration believed that the varmint problem was caused by its past pest-control vendor who had provided substandard treatment due to the state's failure to timely pay for its services. At the time of JHA's visit, administration had just finished contracting with a new pest-control vendor and hoped it would provide better results.

Inmates also noted the bathroom was generally disgusting and in a state of disrepair, which JHA staff and volunteers confirmed. A rusty-colored liquid dripped from the ceilings, which inmates had to artfully dodge as they brushed their teeth or used the restroom. The walls were similarly discolored with patches of rust and grime.

Inmates in Building 1 also reported that air constantly blew through the air vents, making the cells very cold. Some inmates had stuffed toilet paper into the vents to block the airflow. They indicated that they risked being issued a disciplinary ticket for doing this, but that it was worth the risk, because their cells were uncomfortably cold.

Throughout JHA's visit, we also heard from both inmates and staff about the lack of property boxes for inmates to store their personal belongings. Administration acknowledged this was a significant issue and estimated they were short more than 400 property boxes. If inmates do not have a secure place to store their belongings, they are inviting theft, which could lead not only to the loss of property, but also fights between inmates. Administration explained that it was doing everything it could to order more property boxes and repair broken ones.

Multiple inmates also complained of being issued underwear and clothing that was stained, heavily used, and worn threadbare. Based on the tattered clothing JHA saw inmates wearing on the date of our visit, it is fair to say these inmates' reports were accurate. Administration reported that in addition to the clothes inmates are already wearing on arriving at the facility, they are given two pairs of pants, two pairs of socks, two boxers, two shirts and one coat. Laundry service is available five days a week. Shoes are issued on an "as needed" basis. Inmates are also provided with one blanket, one pillowcase and one set of sheets. General population inmates have the opportunity to shop at the commissary about twice a month, and are allowed one hour of outside recreation/yard time three days a week, for a total of three hours yard time per week.

JHA also had the opportunity to visit Building 19, a three-story structure that houses both general population and segregation inmates and is one of Vienna's original buildings. The first floor of Unit 19 houses segregation inmates in both double-bunk cells and a small "bullpen" area. There were 26 inmates in segregation on the date of JHA's visit. The second and third floors of Building 19 house inmates on double bunk-beds in dormitories with communal living, shower and bathroom areas. On the date of JHA's visit, 200 inmates were housed on the second floor of Building 19 and 400 inmates were housed on the third floor.

JHA found housing conditions on the second and third floors of Building 19 to be deplorable and generally unfit for the 600 hundred men who lived there. As JHA entered the second floor, we saw hundreds of inmates with nothing to do except pace around the room or huddle around a small television in the corner of the room. A Vienna staff member seemed to recognize the stunned look on our faces. "This is a nightmare," he said quietly to one of JHA's staff. "This should not be."

The second floor of Building 19 features a large open area lined with metal bunk beds for approximately 200 inmates. The third floor is divided into four separate quadrants, filled with metal bunk beds for about 400 inmates. On both floors, windows were broken and without screens. As a result, birds had flown into the living areas and built nests in the light fixtures. Inmates complained that mice, cockroaches, and other insects were everywhere.

JHA volunteers saw what appeared to be rodent droppings on the floors of Building 19. Multiple inmates reported that rodent and vermin infestation was even worse in the dietary unit and dining hall. An inmate who worked in the dietary unit confirmed that mice were everywhere in the dining hall and frequently ran across the floors during meals. Inmates also reported that they were not given sufficient time to consume meals, as they were only allotted five minutes to eat.

Inmates told JHA that because Building 19 lacked air conditioning, the building was unbearably hot in the summer time, and because several windows were broken, it could become frigid in the winter. Inmates use sheets and paper to cover broken windows. The administration indicated it was in the process of soliciting contractors to have the windows fixed, and hoped that the project would be completed before harsh winter weather set in.

The metal bunk beds were also in varying states of disrepair. One inmate showed a JHA staff member how some of the beds were not bolted to the floor and could easily tip over if a heavier inmate shifted his weight unevenly when attempting to climb onto the top bunk. Another inmate showed a JHA staff member how several top bunk mattresses lacked sufficient support. As a result, when a person laid down on the top bunk, his mattress would sink and, in some instance, come close to touching the person in the bunk below.

In the living area, half of the lights were not functioning. Some fixtures showed clear water damage and appeared beyond repair. On the third floor, JHA volunteers observed large brown rectangular ventilation units that did not appear to be functioning. The vents were covered in grime and dust.

JHA found conditions in the bathrooms on both floors to be particularly disturbing. On entering the second floor bathroom, a JHA volunteer noted a strong smell of fecal matter and sewage, which several inmates reported was a constant problem. The floors were wet and slippery. One section of the bathroom had a significant amount of water leaking from the ceiling, which an inmate was trying to mop up. Throughout the bathroom, pipes

in the ceiling were exposed and in serious disrepair. The second floor bathroom contained three toilets and three sinks, but inmates reported the toilets often do not work. Inmates also reported that when using the toilets, brown liquid drips onto them from the ceiling above.

Because the second floor bathroom lacks showers, all Building 19 inmates must share the seven showers that are located on the third floor. Inmates reported that several of these showers were unusable because they lacked sufficient water pressure and merely dribbled out a small stream of water. A second floor inmate explained that at 3:00 p.m. each day, correctional staff usher inmates from the second floor to the third floor to shower. Because of the sheer number of persons demanding to use the showers, it is rare that all second floor inmates have the opportunity to shower each day.

In addition to showers, the third floor bathroom contained four toilets, four sinks and two urinals. Upon walking into the third floor bathroom, JHA volunteers immediately noted a strong paint smell and signs that it had been recently painted. Despite these cosmetic efforts, the air was noticeably stuffy, humid, and fetid, and the shower seemed to lack functioning ventilation. As in the second floor bathroom, water dripped from the ceilings' exposed and rusted pipes. Apart from the conditions of the bathroom, the third floor had only one functioning phone at the time of JHA's visit. Already frustrated by the conditions of their confinement, inmates reported that the lack of adequate phones has led to repeated fights.

Exacerbating the situation, there are only a handful of correctional officers assigned to monitor inmates in Building 19. Administration reported that two correctional officers are assigned to monitor the second floor and three correctional officers are assigned to the third floor 24 hours a day. However, a correctional officer that JHA spoke with indicated to the contrary that only two correctional officers are assigned to the third floor during the night shift.

In either case, JHA finds these security staffing levels to be insufficient and unsafe. Indeed, an inmate reported to JHA that, in the absence of a sufficient security presence, inmates often begin fights and "jump" each other on the stairway between the second and third floors because there are no correctional officers assigned to monitor the area. Perhaps the most powerful condemnation of Building 19's conditions came from an inmate that JHA spoke with who was recently released from Vienna, but previously lived in Building 19's dorms. He reported that, while he was at Vienna, he knew several inmates who purposefully started fights and committed major rule infractions solely for purposes of being transferred from Vienna to another facility. Although these inmates apparently recognized their infractions would result in a lengthy period of segregation, the loss of good time credit time, and serving a longer sentence in higher security, they found these preferable to living in Building 19's awful conditions.

Segregation

Vienna's segregation cells are located on the first and third floors of Building 19. They

can hold approximately 30 people in total. The first floor segregation area consists of double-bunk cells and a bullpen area that holds roughly ten inmates. The third floor contains several additional individual segregation cells.

During JHA's visit, most of the inmates we interviewed were in segregation for refusing housing. According to administration, inmates typically will not spend longer than two weeks in segregation because inmates who commit serious infractions leading to longer segregation times are usually "stepped up" and transferred to a higher security facility. Administration further reported that, at the time of JHA's visit, none of the inmates in segregation were receiving psychotropic medications or mental health treatment.

Segregation inmates are allowed one hour of out-of-cell recreation time per week and to shower once every three days. In addition, segregation inmates are permitted to have one one-hour "no contact" visit with family behind a glass enclosure each week. Segregation inmates are fed all meals in their cells and their access to personal property is limited, as televisions and radios are forbidden. Access to commissary is also limited. Once a week, segregation inmates are permitted only to buy writing paper, envelopes or shower shoes from the commissary. Hygiene products and pens are provided on an "as needed" basis, as is access to library services.

As in Vienna's other living units, JHA saw evidence and heard multiple reports of cockroach and insect infestation in segregation housing. However, we were most struck by the exceedingly harsh living conditions of the bullpen segregation area. The bullpen, which contained a single toilet and a single sink, was cramped, dark, windowless, poorly ventilated and generally miserable in every respect. On the date of JHA's visit, it housed ten inmates in double bunk beds. These inmates, left to lie on their beds for hours in the dark, were thoroughly despondent and dejected. Unlike the inmates in segregation that JHA generally encounters on visits, the inmates in the bullpen were neither animated nor eager to speak with us, but seemed listless and defeated.

The administration acknowledged that the bullpen was far from an ideal place for housing segregation inmates. It indicated that, if possible, it would like to knock down the bullpen's walls to create individual segregation cells. The administration nevertheless found the bullpen to be workable and tolerable, at least for the foreseeable future, on the basis that inmates were generally not housed there for more than a few weeks. JHA asked the administration to consider the possibility of mitigating the harsh living conditions of bullpen inmates by giving them more yard time. The administration stated that increasing yard time was not a top priority given the facility's more urgent, immediate challenges, but that it would consider the possibility.

Physical and Mental Health

While Vienna has a medical observation room and a mental health unit, the facility lacks an infirmary and crisis cells for inmates experiencing severe psychological episodes. When inmates require an infirmary or are placed on crisis/suicide watch, they must be housed in Shawnee Correctional Center, a male medium-security prison that is adjacent

to Vienna.

Both the medical and mental health offices are located on the first floor of Building 19. The facility is authorized for and employs one full-time physician and one full-time pharmacy technician. While authorized to employ eleven full-time nurses, Vienna was understaffed with only ten nurses at the time of JHA’s visit. On average, nurses must see and treat 70 to 90 inmates on the sick call each day. In addition, medications must be distributed to inmates through medication lines conducted twice daily out of the centrally located town square.

According to the health care administrator, medical staff members are managing their caseloads fairly well, despite a great need for more nurses. At the same time, the administrator noted that the facility struggles to provide care for inmates with chronic illnesses (see chart), as well as a growing number of mentally

Number of Vienna Inmates Diagnosed with Chronic Illnesses (Reported 9/27/2011)
Asthma 138
Cancer 4
Diabetes 64
Hepatitis C 94
Chronic Hepatitis B 1
HIV 22
Hypertension 322
Seizures 32
Tuberculosis 29

ill inmates with medication needs. A mental health staff member noted that Vienna’s lack of crisis cells in particular poses a huge problem, given this growing number of mentally ill inmates. At the time of JHA’s visit, Vienna had only one part-time psychiatrist (eight hours per week) and one full-time on site psychologist (40 hours per week) to address the needs of almost 1,700 inmates.

JHA had the opportunity to speak with Vienna’s psychologist, and was profoundly impressed with her dedication and professionalism. However, JHA believes that this mental health staffing level cannot possibly begin to meet the needs of an inmate population this size. We also believe that these work conditions will eventually exhaust and burn out even the most dedicated and qualified staff.

The mental health staff member we spoke with noted that she tries to check each inmate who is receiving mental health treatment every 30 days, which means she needs to see about 20 inmates a day. Even as she aims to work at this feverous pace, she is still 62 percent behind. This is not surprising given the demanding mental health needs of Vienna’s population.

According to staff, the number of inmates receiving mental health treatment has tripled in the last three years. At the time of JHA’s visit, 196 inmates were under psychiatric care. Of these, 152 inmates were receiving psychotropic medications, none involuntarily. The mental health staff member explained that she currently was treating inmates with the following diagnoses: 135 affective disorders, 35 psychotic disorders, five developmentally disabled, and the rest inmates with a variety of general to severe mental disorders. She suspected that some inmates’ mental illnesses were exacerbated by the

anxiety of being in a less structured environment than they have grown accustomed to in other prisons. It is equally probable that the high stress from Vienna's overcrowded environment and extremely poor living conditions exacerbate or independently generate new symptoms of mental illnesses.¹³

The mental health staff also described how the lack of crisis cells interferes with her work. When inmates decompensate and need to be closely monitored, Vienna's staff must take them to Shawnee's crisis unit. In a typical month, Vienna's health care staff sends about six to eight inmates to Shawnee for this purpose. Even though these inmates are housed in Shawnee's crisis unit, they remain Vienna's responsibility. Consequently, Vienna's sole mental health care worker must regularly visit these inmates, which is important, but takes her away from the facility and the other inmates in her care.

To address the lack of medical and mental health staffing, DOC utilizes telemedicine, a program that uses telecommunications and information technology to administer health care remotely. Both the health care administrator and mental health staff were ambivalent about telemedicine. In general, they said telemedicine relies on two things that Vienna currently lacks: adequate support staff and an electronic system for medical records

In addition to all these issues, Vienna lacks sufficient dental providers to meet the needs of its population. While the facility is authorized for and employs one full-time dentist and one full-time dental assistant, it does not have a dental hygienist to perform teeth cleanings. Further, it has only one functioning dental chair. Consequently, there are substantial backlogs for inmates to receive dental treatment. At the time of JHA's visit, the administration reported the following wait times: one to two weeks wait for tooth extractions; two years for dentures; two years for fillings; and two and a half years for teeth cleaning.

Staffing & Inmate Programming

Severe overcrowding, understaffing and lack of programming at Vienna have placed a tremendous strain on correctional staff. A senior correctional officer reported to JHA that while he did not believe in "catering to inmates," increasing programming, inmate jobs and regular recreation times at Vienna was important for safety reasons because inmate idleness and frustration had led to short tempers, increased staff assaults and inmate fighting. As this officer expressed, "We all want to be able to go to work, do our jobs, and come home at the end of the day." This officer was heartened that money was finally being reinvested in Vienna to fix some of its severe physical plant issues, like broken windows in housing units and roofs that were collapsing. However, he was skeptical that the situation would improve significantly without increasing inmate programming and clerical and security staffing levels.

¹³ See Terry A. Kupers M.D., *Trauma and Its Sequelae In Male Prisoners: Effects of Confinement, Overcrowding and Diminished Services*, American Journal of Orthopsychiatry Vol. 66, Issue 2 (April, 1996) (discussing research that links prison overcrowding and diminished services to increased violence, psychiatric decompensation, suicide, hypertension, and other medical and mental health conditions).

With 186 correctional officers, 16 correctional sergeants, and six shift supervisors, Vienna was considered “fully staffed” for these positions at the time of JHA’s visit. However, with 14 correctional lieutenants, it was well below its authorized staffing level of 17 lieutenants. Vienna was also severely understaffed with respect to clerical/administrative support personnel. While authorized for 32 clerical support staff, only 25 of these positions were filled when JHA’s visited. Consequently, to make up for this insufficiency in clerical staff, three correctional officers had to be reassigned from their security duties to perform clerical work 22 days each month (for a total of 495 hours monthly).

Alongside of Vienna’s current staffing problems, it faces a critical wave of retirements, which, according to the administration, will “cripple” the facility and efforts to improve operations. There are 28 persons retiring, including some of the most senior, experienced staff. Among persons retiring: seven lieutenants, five sergeants, two dietary supervisors, two clinical services supervisors, two counselors, a secretary, three persons in the records office, and a supervisor at the boot camp.

At the time of JHA’s visit, there were four Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes offered. A total of 58 inmates were enrolled in these, and 170 inmates were on the waitlist for ABE classes. In addition, there were two GED classes in which 31 inmates were enrolled. A total of 43 inmates were on the waitlist for GED classes.

Vienna offers some vocational training to inmates, including courses in auto body, auto mechanics, commercial custodial work, food services, career technologies and cosmetology. Administration did not provide specific data to JHA on the number of inmates involved in vocational training, but indicated that the number was very small. The vast majority of Vienna’s inmates do not have the opportunity to participate in any educational or vocational courses.

Vienna’s administrators reported to JHA that when they first arrived at the facility, almost 90 percent of inmates had job assignments. As a result, Vienna was running \$2,000 over budget each month in paying inmate wages. Administrators explained that to get the budget under control, they had to cut about 1,000 inmate jobs, which left a great number of inmates idle, frustrated, and without a means to earn money. According to administration, the job cuts were necessary, not only for budgetary reasons, but because there was not enough work to go around. Thus, multiple inmates were being assigned to jobs and getting paid for work that required only one man.

JHA agrees that budgetary constraint and fiscal responsibility are essential to a well-run facility. However, JHA remains troubled by the whole-scale cutting of inmate jobs at Vienna, particularly given the lack of other educational and vocational opportunities for Vienna inmates. Prison employment helps rehabilitate inmates, decrease recidivism, and reduce inmate idleness, increasing safety and security in the correctional environment.¹⁴

¹⁴ See Kerry L. Pyle, *Prison Employment: A Long-Term Solution To the Overcrowding Crisis*, 77 Boston University Law Review 178 (1997); Jessie L. Krienert, Mark S. Fleisher, *Crime and Employment: Critical Issues in Crime Reduction for Corrections* (2004 AltaMira Press).

To balance the needs of both rehabilitation and budgetary responsibility, Vienna's administration should explore and seriously consider bringing an industry to Vienna, as this could help to both increase inmate employment and work skills and reduce costs to taxpayers through the sale of inmate-produced goods.

Visiting Area

General population inmates are allowed eight personal visits per month. Visits can occur on weekend days and on one weekday each week. There are no time limits on the visits, with the exception that when the visiting room becomes overcrowded, visits will be limited to two hours. Visiting hours are held Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Visitors and inmates can hold hands above the visiting tables and are allowed to hug and kiss once upon greeting and once upon leaving. Inmates are also permitted to hold their infant children. As previously stated, segregation inmates are limited to one one-hour "no contact" visit with immediate family members behind a glass enclosure each week.

JHA had the opportunity to see Vienna's visiting room. While there some crayons and books for children, the area was otherwise very drab, dreary and institutional looking. Administration reported that work was scheduled to soon begin painting a mural in the visiting room. At the time of JHA's visit, the visiting room was furnished with 16 tables, each table having four adjoining chairs. These furnishings were paint-chipped and in shabby condition, adding to the general gloominess of the surroundings.

As DOC refurbishes Vienna, it should improve the visiting area, making it more family and kid friendly. Visiting areas serve a vital function in any prison. They not only provide inmates with space to meet with family, friends, and loved ones, but they can also help reduce recidivism and save taxpayer money. A recent study from Minnesota Department of Corrections found that inmates who received regular visits were "significantly less likely to recidivate."¹⁵

Moreover, parent-child visitation has beneficial effects on the emotional adjustment of children to the grief and loss caused by parental incarceration. Given that prison-visiting rooms are, in fact, public spaces often used by children, the needs of children for a physically and emotionally safe visiting environment should be recognized. Monochromatic visiting rooms areas with sparse metallic furnishings and fixtures are reminiscent of medical settings, which are often frightening to children and offer no visual reassurance. Inexpensive modifications to prison visiting rooms, such as painting

¹⁵ See Minnesota Department of Corrections, "The Effects of Prison Visitation on Offender Recidivism," Nov 2011, found at <http://www.doc.state.mn.us/publications/publications.htm>.

visiting room walls with bright colors or murals can help to lessen the stress of this environment for children and incarcerated parents alike.¹⁶

Population & Facility Demographics

The average age of inmates at Vienna is 35. Approximately 12 percent of Vienna's population is 50 or older. The racial-ethnic makeup of Vienna's population is roughly 67 percent African American, 21 percent White, 11 percent Hispanic, and approximately 1 percent Native American and Asian combined.

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¹⁶ See Denise Johnston, *Parent-Child Visits In Jails*, *Children's Environments*, Vol. 12 (1) 33-56 (March 1995) available at http://colorado.edu/journals/cye/12_1/12_1article2.pdf.

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Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois' juvenile and adult correctional facilities. Every year, JHA staff and trained volunteers inspect prisons, jails and detention centers throughout the state. Based on these inspections, JHA regularly issues reports that are instrumental in improving prison conditions.



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