

A Year of Turmoil at Acadiana Center for Youth

More than 300 pages of reports reveal the chaos and disruption at the Bunkie youth prison. Here are some of the incidents they show:

2021

July 7-8: All units called to the courtyard, where several youths from Bulldogs and Cajun dorms charge the Jaguars dorm door with a set of keys. Three staff are injured. The next night, a large fight breaks out between the Cowboys and Jaguars dorms, with some teens armed with shanks. Youths sport “fresh tattoos” from a “tattoo gun that’s operated by their Playstation.”

Aug. 24: Cowboys and Jaguars dorms fight in the hallway around 8:20 p.m. The Jaguars youth “came out of nowhere,” one staff member said. All available units called.

Oct. 2: A juvenile justice specialist was in a verbal argument with youths in the Bulldogs dorm when suddenly they started physically attacking the staff member. Another employee tried to help “but it was dark and everything was happening really fast,” they wrote.

Oct. 20-21: Several dorms reported to school with “no JJS staff ... to monitor the students.” The next day, five dorms did not report to school “due to no JJS staff to accompany” them.

Nov. 11-16: Staff report multiple incidents of youths in one dorm climbing through the ceiling, often to antagonize and threaten another dorm. In one case, youths in Tigers dorm emerged from the ceiling to “throw food and milk and other liquids” all over the Lions unit

Nov. 17: A shank and tattoo gun are discovered in an empty bed.

Dec. 2: An instructor described how he was trapped alone in a room with “angry youth” from Jaguar dorm without his keys for almost an hour. No staff were present and no one came when the teens began to loudly kick the door: “If I were harmed no one would know for at least 20 minutes,” he wrote.

2022

Jan. 11-12: No dorms reported to school because of a staff shortage the first day, and the second day due to a COVID lockdown.

Jan. 25: Youths in Jaguars and Cowboys dorms “were being combative.” At least one youth had to be referred to the infirmary.

March 18-25: The school principal reports the computers have been down since March 7. For at least four days in this time frame, no dorms attended school because of the computer issues and insufficient staff.

March 25: A maintenance worker was reported to have called the youths “monkeys” and then “animals” after another staff member scolded him.

June 14: A team conducted a search of Cajuns unit that yielded “3 homemade shanks, a phone charger and block, staples, a sock with iron metal pieces, a blue Bic lighter, and an empty container that had a strong marijuana smell.”