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## 2 Juvenile Justice Employees Fired After Teen Is Choked, Thrown

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**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** -- Two Department of Juvenile Justice employees will be fired after an ongoing investigation revealed the use of inappropriate force that knocked an 18-year-old resident unconscious at a Marianna facility, department Secretary Walt McNeil said Friday.

The investigation into the incident has made it clear that the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys has widespread deficiencies, McNeil said. The department has made management changes and hired an independent consulting firm to oversee the facility, which is a high-risk residence currently housing 162 boys from 14 to 21 years of age.

"We recognize that there are systemic operational problems at our Dozier facility that span the chain of command from top to bottom," McNeil said. "It is clear that we have to act decisively to change the culture of our Dozier facility."

On Feb. 11, resident Justin Caldwell was choked and thrown to the floor by Alvin Speights, a residential officer at the Dozier school, McNeil said. On the way down, Caldwell hit his head on a table and was knocked unconscious.

Speights was in the process of being fired Friday, and Dozier's acting superintendent, John Tallon, was fired Thursday, McNeil said.

Caldwell had assaulted a different officer earlier in the day, but McNeil could not say whether Speights' actions were in retaliation for that incident because the investigation is ongoing. Other firings could come after the completion of the investigation.

Caldwell is currently in jail in Jackson County as a result of the earlier incident, McNeil said.

Among the changes that will take place, the department's assistant secretary of residential services will temporarily move his office to the facility to supervise daily operations, McNeil said. Community Trust, a Tallahassee-based consulting firm specializing in juvenile justice facility management, will also oversee daily operations, and its chief executive will become acting superintendent.

Also, the facility's 200 employees will be trained in verbal intervention techniques to replace physical actions against youth who are misbehaving.

McNeil said Friday's announcement was an effort to be transparent about problems at the department.

The department came under scrutiny after 14-year-old Martin Lee Anderson died in January 2006, a day after being roughed up by guards at a Panama City boot camp. The Florida Legislature dismantled the military-style boot camps during last year's legislative session.

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