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Scathing Report Details Abuse At Juvenile Prison

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INDIANAPOLIS -- Federal authorities are calling on Indiana to address abuses within its juvenile correction facilities after reports of young inmates sexually assaulted by guards and living in filth.

A [Jan. 29 letter and report](#) from U.S. Assistant Attorney General Thomas Perez to Gov. Mitch Daniels details troubles within the former Indianapolis Juvenile Correctional Facility, including a mentally ill inmate left dirty and pulling out her hair and male guards having sex with and performing strip searches on young female inmates, [6News' Joanna Massee](#) reported.



Video: Scathing Report Details Abuse At Juvenile Prison

"The sexualized environment at the facility appears rampant," the letter read.

The letter follows a civil rights investigation launched by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2008 that documented inadequate abuse investigations, excessive use of force and isolation, inadequate mental health care and inadequate special education services.

In January, a [study commissioned by the department](#) found that 36 percent of inmates at the Pendleton Juvenile Correctional Facility reported being sexually abused, while 23 percent of inmates at the Indianapolis Juvenile Correctional Facility said they had been the victim of sexual abuse.

Two former Department of Correction employees who taught at the Indianapolis Juvenile Facility during the Department of Justice's 2008 site visits spoke to 6News on a condition of anonymity about what they witnessed.

"(There were) vermin everywhere, cockroaches. The girls made pets of the mice," one former teacher said. "They would talk about that, and I have been in the cottages and seen mice."

Another teacher, who called the system broken, said that in addition to having sexual contact with guards, girls appeared to have sexual contact with each other.

"That was part of the culture of this facility, that they accepted homosexual relationships between the girls as normal," the teacher said.

Both teachers left the facility in August of 2009 and are now involved in legal proceedings against the facility.

Gail Eckert's 15-year-old daughter was locked up at the Indianapolis Juvenile Correctional Facility, where she was sexually assaulted by a guard, Jon Furman, who was later convicted of sexual misconduct with a minor.

Eckert said she tried to warn officials about Furman's inappropriate behavior with young female inmates but got nowhere.

"That's what makes me so mad, because I tried to help my daughter, and it just went in deaf ears," she said. "It's just a mother's worst nightmare."

The Indianapolis Juvenile Facility has since been closed and relocated to Madison, Ind.

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The Department of Justice started investigating Indiana's juvenile centers six years ago.

Daniels subsequently volunteered to make improvements at all the facilities and to provide reports resulting from a partnership with the Indiana Juvenile Justice Task Force, an agency charged with monitoring the expected improvements.

Task force director William Glick said members of his organization found improvements at the Indianapolis Juvenile Correctional Facility after the feds went in.

"That's a long, difficult process of change," he told Massee.

The Department of Correction said in a [statement](#) that officials found fewer incidents of sexual abuse than what federal authorities recorded, and pointed out that the Indianapolis Juvenile Facility has been closed.

"The IDOC sincerely regrets that any juvenile entrusted to our care was subjected to sexual victimization or mistreatment by employees who violated their public trust, or by other offenders, and we have re-doubled our efforts to provide a safe and effective rehabilitative environment for the youth in our custody," the statement read.

6News was not allowed inside the new facility in Madison.

Both Daniels and Correction Commissioner Edwin Buss declined to be interviewed.

More:

- [Federal Letter\Report To Gov. Mitch Daniels](#)
- [IDOC Response To 6News](#)

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