

This is the new entrance to the fully secured Reception and Assessment Center. The door is next to a staff member's office, behind the window just left of the door.

Program brings tighter security

By Noreen Fleck
staff writer

Boys can't climb the 18-foot-tall fence around the basketball court that's part of the new assessment center at Boys Republic, a temporary home in Farmington Hills for delinquent boys ages 12-17.

The fence links were designed too small for feet or hands. The higher the fence goes, the smaller the links get.

Bedroom doors in the fully secured center are locked at night. An audio system monitors the building 24 hours a day.

The assessment program, plus increased staff and renovation of three housing units on the medium-secure campus, has brought tighter campus security, in turn, curtailing truancy and making the neighborhood safer, Boys Republic officials say.

"This program is a total improvement for our facility," said Phyllis Griffin, Boys Republic executive director. "Some kids need structure and control. With the lack of structure, some kids get lost. They lose control."

PHYSICAL RENOVATIONS on the 80-acre campus at Nine Mile and Inkster began in May, when Boys Republic agreed to a one-year contract with the state Department of Social Services to operate the assessment program.

In exchange for improving campus security, the DSS, strapped for beds for juveniles, will continue to send more boys to Boys Republic. As part of the agreement, the campus will also receive a higher daily payback from the state, which will help pay off a \$1 million mortgage taken for security improvements.

Instead of being placed there by the state after assessment, boys in the new program still must be assessed before the state places them for long-term treatment.

Boys Republic can refuse a boy for the new program after reviewing his record and family background. There's also a 24-hour window to seek reassignment of trouble-makers and five days for the state to reassign them, Griffin said.

THE TWO campus units housing assessment program boys are being renovated to include security window screens, door locks and audio monitoring. Bedroom doors are locked at night. The boys never leave the center during their 30-day stay.

"If they are locking these boys up at night, that is no longer minimum security," said Delphine Piechowski, a longtime neighbor. "Locks on the doors, seals on the windows — that's maximum security as far as I'm concerned."

The assessment program opened July 26 with 20 boys assigned to the first unit. Twenty more boys are expected to enter the second unit, which should be complete, including an enclosed basketball court, by Sept. 15.

The third unit, housing 22 boys in the residential treatment program, will be renovated by October. It will have securer windows but

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boys home director

bedroom doors will not be locked at night.

Treatment program boys have less supervision and more mobility to roam the campus and use the pool. Their basketball court is not enclosed. Treatment program boys can return home on weekends with social worker approval; assessment program boys earn family visits.

ENTERING THE assessment center, the boys are walked through a metal detector and searched.

The assessment program provides a token rule and level system. Standard rules and consequences are provided for boys to meet "target behaviors" and climb up three levels: orientation, intermediate and senior.

Incentives in the form of tokens are given for good behavior — volunteering with a positive attitude, completing work projects and chores, actively listening in group sessions.

Boys can earn up to 100 tokens per day to buy campus store items such as snacks, shampoo or deodorant.

Privileges range on the level system. Boys earning 300 points move to the intermediate level. They can spend 50 tokens to buy up to two phone calls for five minutes during their stay. Boys must earn up to 1,500 points to enter the senior level where they can place up to three phone calls per week or phone calls totaling 30 minutes.

A BEHAVIOR management room is on each floor of the assessment center. A boy who becomes violent is placed in the room "until he calms down," said John Ross, assessment center day supervisor. "Calming down" may take 15 minutes or as long as two hours, he said.

Boys in both the assessment and treatment programs have four hours of chores, four hours of academic classes, two hours of recreation and two hours of quiet time each day. The difference is assessment program boys don't leave the assessment center during their 30-day stay.

In the treatment program, boys have been known to run away, said Jeanne Ward, professional services director. "Sometimes they come back, sometimes they don't," she said.

No boys have tried to leave campus in the assessment program, she said.

"If boys (in the assessment program) try and get out now, they will be escapees (not runaways). That's the difference," Piechowski said.

Repeat offenders at home

Continued from Page 1

FOR AT least 15 years, Boys Republic has offered a residential treatment program for wards of the state charged with burglary, auto theft or a drug offense, Griffin said.

But the DSS has the option of assigning a boy with more than one offense to either Boys Republic program, Griffin said.

"If a kid committed two B&Es (breaking and entering), he would not be sent here; he would go to a maximum-secure facility," Griffin said. "If he committed two B&Es in one year, he may possibly be sent here."

"We need to know what we are dealing with here," said George Roberts, Olde Town Homeowners Association president. "Are we dealing with kids that need discipline because they can't get along or because they are violent?"

Most boys older than 15 charged with murder are waived from the juvenile court system and tried as an adult, said William Dwyer, Farmington Hills police chief.

'I don't care what they say, those are not the same type of boys.'

— Delphine Piechowski
Boys Republic neighbor

"On the surface, it seems that they are improving the facility and decreasing the number of truanties," he said.

"But we need to investigate more to take a look and see if there is a change in the people they are taking in. We have to make sure these are the same type of people as in the past."

Dwyer will submit his findings to the city council on Monday, Aug. 28. Boys Republic officials will attend the meeting to answer questions.

JOHN ROSS, a day supervisor, said the

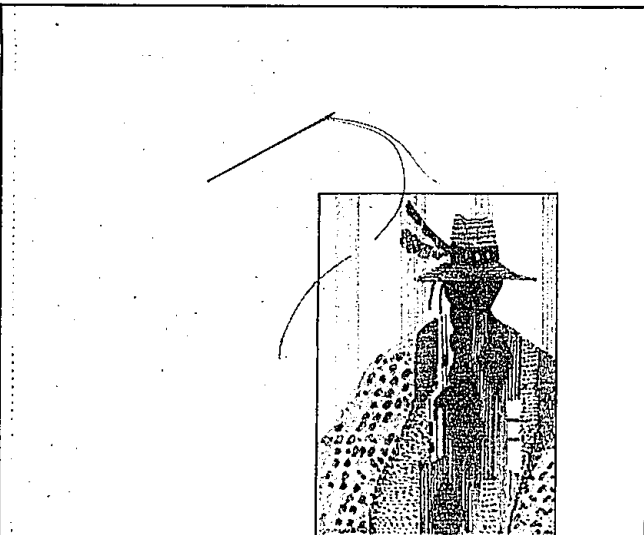
assessment program houses no boys charged with murder. He said the present group does include boys who have been shot and boys charged with sexual assault but not rape.

"We will not accept any rapists or murderers," Griffin said.

John Knappmann, Wayne County assistant prosecutor, said anyone 15 or older charged with murder usually is tried as an adult. Most of the boys at Boys Republic have gone through the Wayne County juvenile court system.

"Many times, anyone 15 or older involved in any life offense is tried in the adult system," he said.

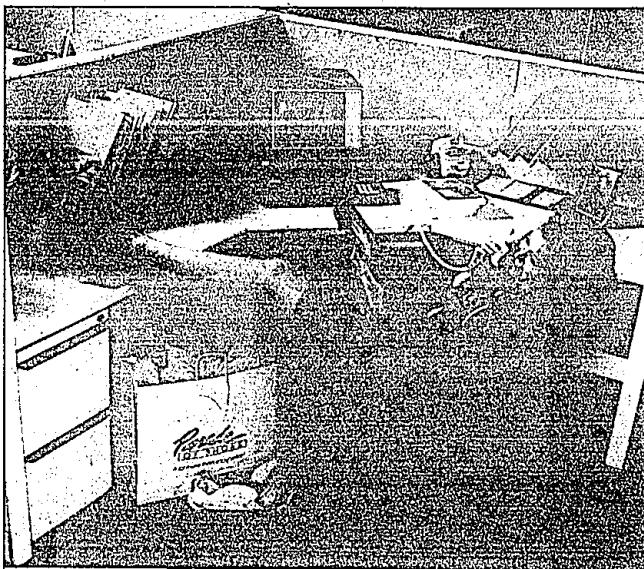
Life offenses include murder, armed robbery, rape, attempted murder, assault with intent to commit murder, assault with intent to rob while armed and drug offenses involving at least 650 grams of cocaine or heroin, he said.



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