

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
FOR THE COUNTY OF LEWIS**

360 N.W. North St., MS:JUV01
Chehalis, WA 98532-1900

JUVENILE COURT

(360) 740-1178
Fax (360) 748-2258
TDD (360) 740-1480

Shad B. Hail
Administrator

Susan E. Wickert
Office Manager

Vanessa L. Conwell
Detention Manager

Rickie Anders
Probation Manager



Hon. J. Andrew Toynbee
Judge - Department No. 1

Hon. Paul A. Strophy
Judge - Department No. 2

Hon. Joely A. Yeager
Judge - Department No. 3

Cailen L. Cecil
Court Commissioner

To: the Lewis County Board of County Commissioners

From: Shad Hail, Juvenile Court Administrator

Re: Read Ahead Request For 2 Additional Rotating Hourly Full-time detention staff.

Overview:

Two of the greatest risks of liability to a county come from the jail and the juvenile departments, and specifically from juvenile detention centers.

Our juvenile detention facility currently has twelve full-time salaried officers and two full-time hourly officers (one is currently vacant due to lack of applicants). There are three total officers on day shift and three on night shift, with sometimes a fourth officer during the main court docket each week. Detention officers alternate working four shifts of 12 hours one week and three the next. The detention facility requires coverage 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The hourly officer's role is primarily to cover absences for salaried staff. Depending on sick and vacation leave accrual rates, there are currently approximately 2,900-3,200 hrs per year of leave that must be covered by those two hourly officers or casual help which is approximately 1.5 FTE. This is just the leave time and does not include coverage for FMLA, PFML, vacancies, academy coverage, court dockets, training coverage, administrative leave, bereavement leave, medical or treatment transports, emergencies, etc... In a detention setting, these other types of things happen very frequently and many of these things have to be covered with overtime.

While operating our facility, one officer must remain in the locked control room and two officers handle every other situation, to include everything from overseeing medication dispersal, conducting intakes and releases, facilitating recreation, conducting cell extractions, handling programming responsibilities, responding to youth in crises, coordinating visitation, cleaning the facility, handling emergencies and a host of other responsibilities. If there are two youth involved in an incident, this means two staff are available to handle it. This has been the case since budget reductions resulted in the loss of two to three officers circa 2008-09 and has

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presented challenges and high levels of risk ever since, but historically we were at least able to mitigate that risk to a small extent with the experience of our staff and the structure of the program.

Over just the last couple of years, we have experienced an unprecedented level of retirements and turnover. Our average length of experience used to be 8-9 years, with several people having 15 or 20+ years of experience. Our most experienced detention officer currently has 8 years of experience. Our average experience is now 2.7 years, but 50% of the officers have less than 2 total years of experience in the job and that includes 2 of the supervisors.

With all of these new employees comes the imperative need for training, but just meeting minimum staffing on the floor must take priority. This means that there is almost no coverage available to allow for training time, except that which can be piecemealed while on the job.

To put this into perspective, Lewis County Juvenile Court is among the least staffed juvenile detention centers of any size in the state of Washington and is definitively the least staffed facility by average daily population (please see attached statewide data documentation I have compiled). No other facility that houses close to our ADP attempts to run a detention facility with only three people on shift on a regular basis during the day when youth are out of their rooms.

A changing youth population and legislative changes are only compounding what was already a substantial challenge based on our staffing levels. RCW 13.22 went into effect in 2020, impacting the use of room confinement as a consequence for behaviors in detention. Additionally, prior to other relatively recent legislative changes more youth with very serious charges and particularly those with serious violent offenses pending would have been declined to adult jurisdiction and would be housed at the jail. Now they must remain in the juvenile detention center with a few notable exceptions. We also continue to see increasing rates of mental health, criminogenic behaviors including violence, deteriorated support systems, and higher needs in the population we are serving. These factors, combined with less experienced staff and already extremely low staffing levels overall, form an unacceptable cauldron of risk and liability. The risk extends not only to the youth for which we are responsible, but also to our staff and ultimately to the community.

Even with these risks and the unavoidable lack of experience, we have exceptional staff working nothing short of miracles in many situations to de-escalate, reduce the need for the use of force, and provide care for the

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youth we are responsible for. I could not be more proud of the extraordinary efforts they make on a daily basis, while also recognizing the obvious and undeniable fact that they need more resources. They need backup.

Request:

I am requesting authorization and funding to hire two more full-time hourly detention officers. Assuming we could find applicants, we would use these officers to accomplish several things. This will not erase all of the risk or challenges, but with this support we could begin to address our two greatest needs.

The first priority would be to add a fourth officer in detention from 8am-8pm when the majority of youth are out of their rooms and the risk is the highest, particularly when our population is higher. That would allow for three people to respond to suicide and self-harm situations, fights between two or more juveniles, medical emergencies, escape attempts, custodial assaults, and everything else. Second, when the population and other circumstances allow, we would use them to provide coverage for other staff so that we could prioritize training, which is a desperate need we have.

Cost:

Maximum estimated \$191,000 S&Bs annually + \$400 for CBA authorized clothing allowance. This will potentially be lower due to overtime savings.

I will be happy to provide additional information or to answer questions regarding this request.

Respectfully submitted,

Shad Hail
Administrator
Lewis County Juvenile Court

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