

The attached material is cited in *Grimes v. D.C.*, No. 13-7038, slip op. at 4 (D.C. Cir. July 21, 2015); (citing , Henri Cauvin, *Overcrowding at D.C. Youth Detention Center Draws Criticism*, Wash. Post, Jan. 21, 2010, available on 7/21/15 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2010/01/20/AR2010012004707.html>).

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CORRECTION TO THIS ARTICLE

The article about overcrowding at the District's Youth Services Center misstated the month in which the facility's population peaked at 156 detainees. The peak occurred in November, not in August

Overcrowding at D.C. youth detention center draws criticism

By *Henri E. Cauvin*
Washington Post Staff Writer
Thursday, January 21, 2010

The District's youth detention center in Northeast Washington, which is supposed to house no more than 88 juveniles, has had to cram as many as 156 into the facility in recent months during a protracted period of overcrowding that has drawn stern criticism from a court-appointed monitor.

The surge in detainees has strained space and staff at the Youth Services Center on Mount Olivet Road and has emerged as a critical roadblock in an effort to end a 25-year-old class action suit over the District's care of juveniles charged with crimes.

In recent years, the court monitor has reported progress by the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services in addressing some long-standing shortcomings. But persistent overcrowding at the detention center in Northeast and a string of security breakdowns at New Beginnings, the agency's new long-term detention center in Laurel, haven't helped the agency's effort to end court supervision.

D.C. Superior Court Judge Herbert B. Dixon Jr., who oversees the class action case, is scheduled to hold a hearing Tuesday on the overcrowding at the Youth Services Center, where the population early this week stood at 110, below a peak in August of 156 but well above capacity. The center houses boys and girls and was designed for single-room occupancy.

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In a recent report to Dixon, court monitor Grace M. Lopes said the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services and its predecessor agencies have long struggled to manage the juvenile offender population and adequately staff the District's juvenile detention facilities. Those failings, she said, have potentially perilous consequences.

"Individually," Lopes wrote, "each of these problems can create significant safety risks; in combination, they can give rise to

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circumstances that pose substantial risk of harm to youth and staff."

When it closed its notorious Oak Hill facility last spring and [opened the more modern New Beginnings](#), the department accomplished an important goal. But the transition to the much smaller, 60-bed facility compounded the agency's long-standing population management problems, and the effects continue to ripple through the District's juvenile justice system.

The overcrowding at the Youth Services Center is a particularly complicated problem for the department. As the short-term juvenile detention facility, its population of mostly pretrial detainees is driven in part by factors that are not directly under the control of the agency, such as juvenile arrests and judicial decisions. By contrast, the department has broad discretion in deciding which sentenced offenders it holds at New Beginnings and which it supervises in the community.

Whatever the underlying causes, Lopes has made it clear that overcrowding at the Youth Services Center and security gaps that allowed two [escapes at New Beginnings](#) last year must be resolved if the District expects to bring an end to the class action suit.

"Addressing these problems in a more permanent, sustainable way is the sine qua non for the successful resolution of this lawsuit," Lopes wrote in her report.

In a report to the court late last month, the District said City Administrator Neil O. Albert had taken a leading role in resolving the overcrowding at the Youth Services Center. Albert has been receiving daily reports and reviewing the issue at his weekly human services staff meeting. At Albert's direction, top officials from the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, the police department, the D.C. attorney general's office and the child welfare and mental health agencies are meeting regularly to work on the overcrowding issues.

A number of steps are being taken to reduce the population, the District said in its report. The city, for example, is expanding diversion programs for youths with no prior arrests and is bolstering in-school mediation programs. It is also urging alternatives for juveniles who violate probation, and it is expediting and improving psychological assessments.

The success or failure of the efforts is likely to determine the course of the class action suit, which is known as the [Jerry M. case](#), for the name of the lead plaintiff.

Filed 25 years ago, the case has defined juvenile justice in the District for more than a generation and has dogged one mayoral administration after another. The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services was created as a Cabinet-level agency several years ago to give its mission a more prominent place in the District government, and a reform-minded director, Vincent N. Schiraldi, was brought in to remake the city's juvenile justice system.

With his emphasis on a more rehabilitative approach to dealing with juvenile offenders, Schiraldi has drawn a lot of praise but also criticism, not least when youth under the agency's supervision, but not in detention, have ended up involved in homicides -- sometimes as perpetrators and sometimes as victims. Last year, 10 youths under the department's supervision were homicide victims or arrested in a homicide, compared with a total of 14 in 2008.

With Schiraldi departing at the end of the month to run New York City's probation agency, it will be up to his successor to guide the department through what it hopes is the last leg of the Jerry M. lawsuit. This month, Mayor Adrian M. Fenty (D) named one of Schiraldi's top aides, Chief of Staff Marc A. Schindler, to serve as the agency's interim director.

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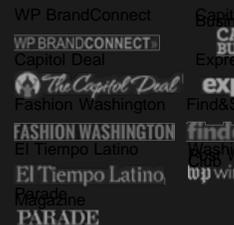
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