

DOC Superintendent Responds to tarnishing Commissioner Mici's
Legacy

By Shawn Fisher

In the article entitled "DOC Mulls Incarcerating Children", the Superintendent of Old Colony Correctional Center (OCCC) responded to the criticisms of how rules are hindering the rehabilitation process. In a concise bullet-pointed letter the superintendent addressed 7 of the 9 issues raised, often using terse explanations as to why these rules were enacted.

As the saying goes, "the devil is in the details." All seven of the superintendent's responses were decisions based on arbitrary excuses rather than evidence based reasoning. Proof of this can be seen in the Superintendent's responses.

Response to No Musical Instruments

"Personal instruments should not have been brought to the chapel. This practice was stopped once staff were (sic) aware."

Why it's an arbitrary excuse: OCCC opened in the late 1980s and from that time inmates have always brought musical equipment to the chapel to be used for religious services. At other Medium Security Prisons, I personally witnessed music equipment being brought to the chapel as far back as 2008. Never once has it been a security threat or an issue. Clearly this is an arbitrary excuse to hinder rehabilitative and religious programming.

Response to Chapel Foyer and Computers

"Computers are not necessary for the Chapel Clerks to perform their duties...the use of institutional space is of no business of incarcerated individuals or does not hinder religious services or the clerks ability to perform their job."

Why it is an arbitrary excuse: This response proves how the Superintendent does not have his finger on the pulse of Rehabilitative Programming in his institution. Chapel Clerks used the computers to create handouts for numerous chapel activities such as Cursillo, Bible Study, Adoration, various Novena's, Religious Book Club, Cenacle, for creation of visual aids for volunteers, and to create monthly schedules and quarterly newsletters. These programming aids no longer exist because of the decision to remove the computers from the chapel. In addition Chapel programming has been hindered because of the recent consolidation of chapel and office equipment into the chapel

itself. This lack of space creates a cramped, irreligious environment. These items used to be located in the chapel foyer which now sits empty and unused for any productive purpose.

As for, "space being of no business to incarcerated individuals", one would think that listening to the feedback from those who are intimately involved and affected by this decision would be considered and encouraged. The dismissiveness clearly shows this is an arbitrary excuse to hinder rehabilitative programming.

Response to AA Cancelled

"AA is on the schedule for 2 nights a week. AA is an approved volunteer lead group therefore it required a volunteer to run."

Why it is an arbitrary excuse: AA used to be offered seven nights a week. There is not a CMR, SOP, or OCCC policy that exists which states a program cannot meet when a volunteer is not present. This is yet another arbitrary excuse to hinder rehabilitation.

Response to Posting for Programs

"Postings are made by the DOT's (director of Treatment) office and poste don (sic) all units."

Why it is an arbitrary excuse: According to a public records request in October of 2023, there were no postings for programs for August, September, or October 2023. Again this is a clear arbitrary excuse to hinder rehabilitation.

Response to No Air Conditioning in Classroom

"Classroom 5 was broken due to be (sic) tampered with. Replacement parts have been ordered."

Why it is an arbitrary excuse: Records show work orders were sent to maintenance to fix the air conditioning unit in classroom 5. Such requests extend backwards three years. Rather the fixing the problem, maintenance "jerry rigged" the unit to work temporarily rather than fixing the actual problem. The fact remains, this A/C unit has been broken for over 6 months, and the maintenance department has been aware of the broken unit for this long. This is clearly an arbitrary excuse.

Response to Cleaning Dog Feces

"While waiting for repair (inmates) were allowed to utilize a hose from the slop sink to clean yard..."

Why it is an arbitrary excuse: It was and is an impossibility. The 10 foot hose will not reach the required 60 foot area to clean the Recreation Deck (the spigot was recently fixed).

Response to No Bathrooms

No response given.

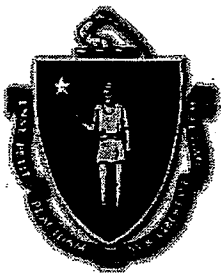
Response to No Water in Classrooms

No response given.

Although I appreciate the responses, the fact remains, the decisions made on the micro level are not in accordance with those coming from the Commissioner's Office. As the Commissioner knows her legacy will be judged on results not excuses because public safety is based on results not excuses.

Arbitrary excuses jeopardize public safety and may seem like a harmless way to quickly deal with a particular situation, however, this way of dealing with problems can easily become routine. Arbitrary excuses heaped upon arbitrary excuses weakens faith in rehabilitative programs. Once that happens, public safety is jeopardized. That is what history will judge Commissioner Mici's legacy on. Even more importantly, that is what society will judge the DOC on - "Am I safer today then I was yesterday?" If the answer to that question is unclear after reading this article, I encourage you to contact Governor Maura Healy at (617) 725-400, 05 or log on at www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-governor.

Tell the Governor why the DOC needs rehabilitation to be prioritized rather than diminished through arbitrary excuses.



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 Old Colony Correctional Center
 Department of Correction
 One Administration Rd.
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II Fisher:

Your letter to the Executive Office of Public Safety and Carol A. Mici, Commissioner regarding programming has been received. Please be advised of the following:

32 Hours

- In addition to classrooms 4, 5 and Vet dog Room (Gym Corridor room 1) we also utilize the RTU classroom on the weekends and at night along with the Library at night. These areas/classrooms are designed to be utilized for structured and approved core programming, volunteer lead groups and self-improvement groups. They are not designed to be "open classrooms" as Mr. Fisher refers to in his letter. Space is often left available to accommodate new programs or returning programs.
- All Core Programs, Volunteer groups, self-improvement groups, religious services and RTU groups are accommodated in the program schedule, meeting all group requirements.
- All II are afforded the right to complete a program application or self-improvement group application requesting the approval of new groups here at OCC.

AA Cancelled

- AA is on the schedule for 2 nights a week.
- AA is an approved Volunteer lead group therefore it requires a volunteer to run. Volunteers have been difficult to obtain, and the DOT is actively working with DOC Volunteer services to find new volunteers. One new AA volunteer recently received Volunteer orientation so hopefully we more groups to be held.

Postings For Programs

- Postings are made by the DOT's office and posted on all units and, in the library, when any new group or program is approved and about to start.

No A/C

- All areas have AC or have mini splits (classroom 5 was broken due to be tampered with- replacement parts have been ordered)

Unable to Clean Feces

- The spicket was broken, maintenance ordered the replacement part to fix it and once it was received it was repaired. While waiting for repair II were allowed to utilize a hose from the slop sink to clean yard of Vet Dog feces.

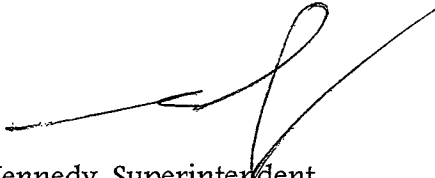
Chapel Foyer & Computers

- Desks and Computers are not necessary for Chapel Clerks to perform their duties.
- No furniture/computers was thrown away.
- The use of institutional space is of no business of II's and does not hinder religious services or the clerk's ability to perform their job.

✓ No Musical Instruments

- Personal instruments should not have been brought to the Chapel. This practice was stopped once staff were aware.
- A keyboard is available, along with CD's.
- A guitar and keyboard have been ordered for Chapel use under staff supervision.

Sincerely,



Stephen Kennedy, Superintendent

cc. Carol A. Mici, Commissioner
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