Executive Summary:
Monitoring Visit to Danville Correctional Center
2/7/2011

On February 7, 2011, John Howard Association (JHA) staff and volunteers visited Danville Correctional Center, a Level 3 High Medium-Security male prison located approximately 135 miles south of Chicago.

Vital Statistics

Population: 1821
Operational Capacity: 1862
Average Cost Per Inmate: $17,014
Average Length of Sentence: 15 months
Average Age of Inmate: 36

Source: IDOC, 2/7/11

Key Observations

- While Danville offers inmates an impressive assortment of post-secondary and vocational programs, it lacks a sufficient number of ABE and GED teachers. As a result, the basic educational needs of many inmates are not being met.

- Like most of Illinois’ prisons, Danville’s population is perilously close to its capacity. The Governor and the General Assembly must act soon to reduce prison overcrowding.

- Although IDOC has partnered with the Vera Institute of Justice to reduce the use of long-term segregation, Danville’s segregation population has increased.

- Danville has many inmates who cannot speak English and the facility lacks sufficient bilingual staff and administration. Consequently, these inmates are excluded from programming and rehabilitative opportunities.
Monitoring Tour of Danville Correctional Center
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On February 7, 2011, John Howard Association (JHA) staff and volunteers visited Danville Correctional Center, a Level 3 High Medium-Security male prison located approximately 135 miles south of Chicago.

Opened in 1985, Danville was designed to hold 900 inmates in single cells. The cells have since been double bunked, making operational capacity 1,862. The population on the day of John Howard’s visit was 1,821.

Staff

Similar to most of Illinois Department of Correction (IDOC) facilities, Danville is plagued by staff vacancies. Warden Keith Anglin attributed many of these vacancies to recent retirements. The facility marked its 25th anniversary this year, and several employees who have been at Danville since it opened have either recently retired or plan to retire soon. At this point, the vacancies have not forced the facility to incur too many overtime hours because Danville absorbed staff from the work camp in Paris, IL that recently closed. However, as more staff near retirement age, vacancies may cause problems in the near future.

Common to other facilities, it is not unusual for positions to remain vacant for months before the administration even receives permission to post hiring notices. For instance, while Danville was recently able to hire a new psychologist and a new head of clinical services, the positions were vacant for some time. As a result, Danville suspended programming for sex offenders. Once the new hires have a chance to catch up on backlogs, they are hoping to restart the program.

Finally, the facility has a severe shortage of Adult Basic Education (ABE) and GED teachers, which will be discussed in more detail below.

Housing

Danville has four general population housing units. Three of these are X-type units with four wings, and the fourth is a T-type unit with three wings. Each wing houses 112 inmates.

Inmates are housed according to job assignment. Job assignments rotate every six months, meaning that housing assignments may also change, though not necessarily. The Warden said that the housing rotation does not significantly disrupt operations at Danville.
Given the fact that Danville was designed to hold about half as many inmates as it currently does, the administration struggles with overcrowding. For instance, the administration formerly allowed an entire wing to be in the dayroom at the same time, but for security and overcrowding reasons, they now only allow half of a wing to be in the dayroom at a time at an hour and fifteen minute intervals. Nevertheless, even with only half of a wing in the dayroom during our visit, JHA observed that the dayrooms still felt overcrowded.

Recommendation: JHA recognizes that neither Danville nor IDOC controls the number of inmates who are committed to state custody. The Governor and General Assembly must act to find ways to safely reduce the state’s prison population.

Medical and Mental Health Care

Inmates can sign up for sick call in their housing unit from the morning until 8:00 PM. If inmates request non-emergency sick calls after 8:00 PM, they will be taken to the medical unit the next morning. There is a co-pay of two dollars unless the visit is related to a chronic condition. If the inmate cannot pay the co-pay at the time of the visit, it is debited to his trust fund and will be deducted when he has the funds. Inmates can go to the medical unit as often as they like, but the co-pay deters frequent visits.

While the medical unit appeared orderly and clean, JHA volunteers noted the smell of feces. Understandably, things may happen in a medical unit that would cause the smell of feces, but the remnant odor raised questions about how quickly and thoroughly the staff maintains the unit. Maintenance followed up on this observation and reported normal air quality at the end of our visit.

The health care unit has a 15-bed infirmary that has three rooms with four beds and another three rooms with single beds. The day JHA visited 11 of the beds were occupied; two inmates are considered permanent residents. Inmates who are housed in the infirmary are not allowed to go to gym, yard, or work.

The newly hired psychologist had been working for three weeks at the time of JHA’s visit and reported that she was catching up on the backlog of patients that built up while her position was vacant. Once she catches up, her goal is to see each inmate on her caseload once a month.

The psychologist meets with about 50 inmates per week, some of whom are regular follow-up appointments, while others are self-referred appointments. There are currently 210 inmates listed as being under psychiatric care, all of whom are on psychotropic drugs.

No group therapy is offered. All sessions with the psychologist are one-on-one. The psychologist described her approach as “eclectic,” meaning that it combines cognitive-behavioral, cognitive, and psychoanalytic approaches.
Segregation

Inmates at Danville may serve anywhere from 7–60 days in segregation. Inmates with more segregation time are usually transferred to a higher security level facility. Danville has two segregation wings with a total of 87 beds. Both wings are in the same building as the health care unit. All of the cells are double bunked except for one, which is used for suicide watch or when someone is on a hunger strike. There were 65 inmates in segregation on the day of JHA’s visit.

Segregation is double bunked because of bed space issues. Danville originally only had one segregation wing, but because the number of segregation inmates increased, the administration converted part of the receiving wing into segregation.

When JHA asked about considering ways to decrease the number of inmates in segregation, staff responded that the issue was out of their hands since segregation depended on the inmates’ behavior. The staff was not particularly responsive to JHA’s inquiry about reevaluating segregation practices. It was also inconsistent with the Illinois Department of Corrections’ partnership with the Vera Institute of Justice to find ways to reduce prisoner isolation.\(^1\)

On the day of JHA’s visit, the segregation unit was noticeably warm, dimly lit, loud, and poorly ventilated. Inmates in segregation only shower twice a week. Thus, ventilation and heat issues can be particularly problematic. Staff indicated that the high temperature was likely due to it being warmer outside than it had been the previous week. They also considered it better that the unit was too warm than too cold, as they receive far more complaints from inmates when it is too cold. Maintenance followed up and reported that the equipment was operating properly and did not find sub-standard air quality.

Inmates in segregation are not allowed any phone calls or electronics. They have limited commissary shop privileges and limited yard time. Segregation visits are non-contact and limited to one-hour intervals twice a month. A counselor tours the segregation unit twice a week to address inmate concerns or problems.

If an inmate in segregation threatens or attempts to commit suicide, a crisis team will interview him and discuss the issue with the psychologist. If the crisis team decides to place the inmate on suicide watch, they will first put him in the shower, strip search him, and give him either a suicide blanket or a suicide smock (not both). The inmate is then put on a 10-minute watch for 24 hours in a single cell with all objects removed from it, including the mattress. After the first 24 hours, the crisis team re-evaluates the inmate’s condition and may begin stepping him down to a 15-minute watch, at which point the

\(^1\) See “Segregation Issues on Front Burner: IDOC Partners with “Vera” to Map Out a New Direction for Illinois Prisons,” IDOC website
http://www.idoc.state.il.us/subsections/news/default.shtml#20100730
inmate is given a jumpsuit to wear. Once the inmate is stepped down to a 30-minute watch, he may have a mattress in the cell.

*Recommendation: Danville should reevaluate its approach to segregation.*

**Education and Programming**

Danville offers education opportunities for inmates at various levels, from Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes to upper-level college courses. The approach to education, however, is disjointed. While School District 429, the prison system’s school district, provide ABE and GED classes, Danville Community College offers some post-secondary programs, and a University of Illinois volunteer program provides some upper-level college courses. While the variety of programs available is commendable, waitlists are commonplace and some programming has been suspended because of staff or volunteer vacancies.

**ABE and GED**

IDOC requires all inmates who test below a sixth grade level to take a 90-day ABE course, while it offers 60 days of good conduct credit for inmates who earn their GED. However, Danville currently has only two teachers for ABE and GED classes. Both of those teachers have reached retirement age and realistically may retire in the coming year. Danville has posted an additional teacher position, but even with one additional teacher it will still be completely unequipped to handle its ABE and GED students.

Although ABE classes are mandatory, many inmates never come off of the waitlist during their sentence. There are currently 230 inmates on the ABE waitlist at Danville. Classes are capped at seventeen students. At that rate, an inmate might spend 40 months on an ABE waitlist, while the average time spent at Danville is 15 months.

There are currently 38 inmates enrolled in GED courses and 45 inmates on the waitlist. The administration gives priority to first-time offenders on the waitlist. Inmates who are enrolled in GED courses are not eligible for a job assignment, which may prevent some inmates from signing up and keep the waitlist relatively small.

The basic educational needs of these inmates are simply not being met. The Assistant Warden of Programming indicated that they would need 13 or 14 teachers to empty the waiting list. More realistically, the Assistant Warden hopes to hire four or five additional teachers this year, but has not been approved to post these positions.

**Post-Secondary Education**

Danville offers eight courses from the Danville Area Community College. The classes are capped at 30 students. Inmates can use the course credit to earn an Associate degree
in either arts and science or general studies. Approximately 500 inmates are eligible for college enrollment. Of those 500, 266 are enrolled in post-secondary courses. Unlike inmates enrolled in GED classes, inmates enrolled in college classes can still qualify for job assignments.

The University of Illinois’ Educational Justice Project is a volunteer-based program run by professors and graduate students. Inmates with an Associate degree or 60 hours of transferable credit are eligible to take courses through this program. Seventy-eight inmates currently meet these criteria. The program offers a variety of courses, including eight for-credit courses per year. Classes are limited to 15 students. Although a Bachelor degree program has not yet been approved through the University of Illinois, inmates may take 400 level courses, which can be used for credit toward a Bachelor’s degree.

**Vocational Programming**

Danville’s contract with Danville Area Community College provides for six vocational and/or career programs. Of the six, only three were functional at the time of JHA’s visit.

Vocational Preparedness (VEEP) offers remedial classes in reading, grammar, and math to prepare inmates to enroll in other college classes. The class is limited to 15 students. Sixteen inmates are currently on the waitlist. First-time offenders are placed higher on the waitlist than repeat offenders.

Career Technologies is a 60-hour course in which inmates learn basic computer skills and other job-related skills such as resume writing. Beginning March 1, 2011, the course will increase to 120-hours and will count for college credit. There are approximately 25 inmates enrolled in Career Technologies at any given time. The classroom has 33 computers (without internet), 30 of which were working on the day of our visit. JHA applauds this course as it provides inmates with tangible skills that will help with re-entry.

Danville’s contract with Danville Area Community College provides for four vocational programs. The facility hopes to have all four up and running later in the year. The only program that is currently open is custodial maintenance, a 54-day program that teaches general cleaning, floor care, and upholstery and carpet cleaning. Upon completion of the program, inmates receive a certificate in custodial work. There are 17 students enrolled, plus three inmates who act as teaching students. Only nine inmates are on the waitlist.

The Auto Technology program is comprised of Basic Auto and Advanced Auto, and teaches students auto repair skills. Students can earn certification and sit for Auto Service Excellence exams. The program lost its instructor in August 2010, but a new instructor has been hired, and the program will re-open March 1st. Enrollment is capped at 17 students, and there are 68 on the waitlist.
Construction Occupations is a 130-day program that teaches tool usage and safety, carpentry, plumbing, and blueprint reading. This program has been closed since 2009, but Danville is in the process of hiring a new instructor and hopes to have the program running in the spring of 2011. In the past, this program has partnered with Habitat for Humanity to construct the walls for locally built homes. Enrollment is limited to 17 per class, and there are 69 inmates on the waitlist.

This spring, a new horticulture program is scheduled to open. It will be a 130-day program that teaches landscape plant identification, turf grass management, soil nursery and greenhouse operations, and pest control. Sixteen inmates have signed up for this course. The horticulture program is replacing the HVAC program. Danville decided to terminate the HVAC program after concluding it was of minimal value because inmates could not get bonded to go into homes once they were released.

**Industries and Jobs**

Danville has 28 inmates who work at on-site industries. Industries include a corrugated box factory, silk screening, and a laundry bag producer for the state. Danville offers 560 other job positions in the Health Care Unit, clothing, laundry, inmate commissary, maintenance, barber, dietary, grounds, administration building, and academic positions such as law clerk.

Job assignments rotate every six months. If an inmate has a particular skill, such as sewing, he may be allowed to stay on that assignment for an additional six-month period.

Each job assignment has a different set of qualifications that the inmate must meet before being assigned. For example, any inmate working in the administration building must have less than four years remaining on his sentence. Sex offenders are scrutinized more than other offenders and are excluded from a number of assignments. For instance, sex offenders are excluded from jobs that involve close proximity or interaction with female staff. This system has the benefit of providing incentives to inmates who are trying to get more desirable assignments, but it also has the detriment of ensuring that some inmates are more likely to be unassigned for a long period of time.

In total, there are 588 job assignments, meaning that at least 1,200 inmates are unassigned at any given time. The large number of unassigned inmates poses a number of problems. First, unassigned inmates have excessive idle time. Their only activities are going to the gym, yard or participating in religious programming. Second, unassigned inmates are unable to earn money to buy necessary items from the commissary. Third, unassigned inmates are denied the opportunity to develop crucial skills to help successful reentry.

*Recommendation: Danville should explore ways to increase the number of available job assignments.*
Religious Programming

Twelve different religious services meet throughout the week according to a posted schedule. The chapel is in the same building as the gym, art studio, and classrooms.

The weekly chapel schedule includes services for Jehovah’s Witnesses, Christian Bible Study, Muslim Jumah Prayer, Catholic Mass, Muslim Service, House of Yahweh, Christian Worship Service, and Jewish Services. All services must be led by a volunteer, not by an inmate.

Gym and Art

The gym has functioning modern equipment. General population inmates go to the gym three times a week for an hour, two wings at a time. During JHA’s visit, inmates were playing basketball and the gym did not appear overcrowded.

Inmates at Danville can take an art class in the art studio. The studio is modest in size, but the artwork was impressive. According to the staff, there are currently five inmates that have significant artistic abilities and teach the other inmates. One of those five learned while he was in prison; the others came to prison with artistic skills. The staff can ask for different artwork to be made by the inmates in the class and only have to pay for supplies. The artwork is displayed in an annual art show.

Although the art studio is a tremendous resource, JHA received a complaint from an inmate regarding the institution’s art policies. Inmates are not allowed to order or keep art supplies unless they are in the art class, for which there is a very long waitlist. Even inmates who are in the art class are not allowed to paint or keep supplies in their cells.

Recommendation: Art is often an important release for inmates. Although the administration states that it restricts arts supplies for security reasons, Level 1 and 2 facilities allow inmates to order art supplies and to paint in their cells. JHA therefore asks the administration to reconsider its art supply policy.

Substance Abuse

Danville is not a substance abuse treatment facility, but it does have substance abuse programs. Two Alcoholic Anonymous programs are currently running, and the administration is looking for a volunteer to run a Narcotics Anonymous program.

Danville is also the only IDOC non-treatment facility to offer a Substance Abuse Counselor Certification program. Last year 95 percent of the inmates who sat for the exam passed. Inmates had to pay $130 of their own money to sit for the exam. JHA applauds this effort as it provides a realistic employment opportunity for inmates upon release.
Improvements

Danville plans to implement a number of new programs. First, the administration hopes to start a storybook program through Lutheran Services of Illinois. This program, which has been in place at Logan Correctional Center for years, allows fathers to record themselves reading a book and then send the recording along with the book to their child. Second, the Devine Hope Bible College is in the beginning stages. Through this program, run by the Mid-America Reformed Seminary, inmates will be able to get a theology degree. Finally, the University of Illinois is looking into creating a pilot program to grow plants to supplement the food supply at Danville. This sustainability project would work in tandem with the new horticulture vocational program referred to above.

Dietary

Three meals are served each day, although inmates have the option of skipping any meals that they do not wish to attend. Breakfast starts at 5:00 A.M. During the winter, but only about 800 of the inmates typically go to breakfast because the rest do not want to get up that early. Dinner starts at 3:45 P.M. and there is no nighttime snack except for diabetics. Thus, during the winter many inmates go about 16 hours from the time they eat dinner to the time they eat lunch.

Lunch on the day of JHA’s visit consisted of grilled cheese, a baked potato, and broccoli. Complaints about soy are common, although because our meal was meatless, there was no soy filler involved.

The head of dietary at Danville has been named in a lawsuit about the use of soy in prison food. She told JHA volunteers that she has no control over the use of soy or the products that she serves, only their preparation.

Danville caters to a variety of special dietary needs. Two-hundred-and-thirty inmates are currently on special diets, the majority of which are therapeutic. Twenty-six inmates are on vegan diets and six inmates are on kosher diets. The chaplain must confirm religious diets before the inmate will be served the special diet.

An inmate in segregation reported that he had been denied a vegan diet despite claiming to have been a vegan his entire life. He claims that his previous institution gave him a vegan-compliant diet. When he was denied the appropriate diet at Danville, he went on a hunger strike. Eventually Danville gave him vegan food to end his strike, but has since put him back on a non-compliant diet.

Recommendation: Danville should reconsider its criteria for allowing an inmate a special diet. If the diet is available at the institution and the inmate is consistent in his preference for it, the preference should not be overlooked.
Grievance Procedure

Danville’s grievance procedure is similar to that of other Illinois’ prisons: Inmates can file a grievance with their counselor who will then submit it to clinical services. Clinical services will look into the issue and then respond to the inmate. If the inmate is not satisfied with the response, he can file a grievance with the Administrative Review Board (ARB) and wait for a response from them. Inmates can file grievances that stem from incidents at other IDOC facilities, but not for issues that occurred before the inmate was sentenced.

There are two counselors per cell house. Inmates can request a different counselor, but most of those requests are denied. Counselors handle questions about good time credits, the grievance process, family contact, and other personal issues.

Danville receives an average of 75–100 grievances per month, more when there has been a lockdown. Staff indicated that they consider about 25 percent of the grievances legitimate and the other 75 percent either unsolvable personal conflicts with staff or meritless claims. Most of the grievances have to do with medical issues. The administration considers the high number of grievances a sign that the system is working well. This runs counter to a report from one inmate who said that communication between staff and the inmates should be more open.

Ideally, inmates receive a response to simple matters within 24 hours. The grievance officer tries to get a response back to the inmate on more complicated matters within 30 days, but staff admitted that this does not always happen.

Other Observations

Lockdown

Danville has been on lockdown twice in the past year for “a day or two” each time. One of the lockdowns resulted from a group fight that posed a security threat in which seven inmates were hospitalized. The cause of the other lockdown was not disclosed.

The facility was also forced into a lockdown-type mode during the recent blizzard and during a recent flu outbreak. Inmates were fed in their cells and programming was suspended for a couple of days.

Commissary

General population inmates are supposed to be able to go to the commissary once a week. One inmate said that in practice they get to go three times a month if they are lucky. Inmates rely on commissary items to supplement their diet and to purchase other basic items.
Inmates currently are able to purchase a Walkman and cassettes from the commissary. Because the technology is outdated, little music is actually available on cassette tapes. IDOC is looking into switching to either CDs or MP3 players, but it is a slow process as it involves security concerns.

Books are currently not available in the Danville commissary. Staff said that they will consider adding books to the commissary, but are unsure whether inmates would spend their limited money on them.

*Recommendation: Danville should ensure that inmates are permitted frequent, regular trips to the commissary.*

**Libraries**

Danville has both a law library and a regular library. The libraries are sufficiently large and in good condition. The budget for buying new books is limited, and Danville relies heavily on donated books. This may be adequate for regular books, but having current legal books must be a priority since it is the only way inmates are able to do legal research.

There is a certified librarian as well as four or five inmates who have been trained to work as law clerks in the law library. Inmates must put in a request to go to the law library and then the librarian will get them in there. She tries to bring inmates in according to who has the earliest deadline and how urgent their need is.

Inmates who are in segregation have access to a few law books that are kept in the building and may read them in a sort of bullpen type area. If inmates are unable to find what they need, they can put in a request with the librarian for different materials.

*Recommendation: JHA believes that it would be nearly impossible for segregation inmates to adequately research a legal issue. Danville should consider ways to improve access to legal resources for inmates in segregation.*

**Non-English Speaking Inmates**

Danville houses many inmates whose first language is not English. Although some of those inmates are bilingual or speak limited English, many lack basic-English skills. Issues that all inmates face are compounded by the inability to communicate with staff or understand what is expected of them. Moreover, inmates who do not speak English are disqualified from job and school assignments and thus have nothing to do.

Spanish-speaking inmates receive the rule handbook in Spanish when they arrive at the facility. JHA volunteers observed, however, that critical notices posted throughout the facility were not posted in Spanish. JHA brought this to Danville’s attention, and they
have since established a procedure to post items in both English and Spanish on the housing bulletin boards.

Part of the problem is that very few staff are bilingual. Danville currently has one bilingual correctional officer and a translator on payroll. This forces the administration to rely heavily on bilingual inmates to help the non-English speaking inmates with day-to-day issues.

There are no bilingual counselors, mental health, or medical staff. Administration has attempted to hire a bilingual counselor, but was unsuccessful. Counselors play a vital role in handling grievances and facilitating other issues for inmates, so non-English speaking inmates are at a significant disadvantage.

According to the head nurse, Danville has handled medical issues by having the bilingual correctional officer sign a HIPPA release and then translate the medical visits for the non-English speaking inmates. This situation presents a number of issues and JHA strongly encourages Danville to hire at least one bilingual medical staff.

There are no legal materials available in Spanish. One of the law clerks is bilingual, however, and translates for Spanish-speaking inmates. Additionally, Bible Study is offered once a month in Spanish.

The administration was very responsive to the language issues that JHA pointed out, but as the hiring process is difficult and drawn out, hiring additional bilingual staff will not be easy.

Danville is currently in the process of developing an English As A Second Language (ESL) program to assist non-English speaking inmates. The administration believes that ESL will help in many areas of programming, including education, anger management, and healthcare. Approximately 60 inmates have already signed up for these classes.

A JHA volunteer spoke to a Spanish-speaking inmate who said that he did not know of a single bilingual staff. He reported that non-English speaking inmates were not offered educational courses or jobs. He was looking forward to the ESL classes and felt they would help the non-English speaking inmates. He reported that when non-English speaking inmates had a grievance or a request to bring to the Warden, they would use bilingual inmates to communicate their request.

Recommendation: Danville should continue to find ways to meet the needs of its non-English-speaking population. IDOC should also study this issue and ensure that it is not simply incarcerating but also rehabilitating its non-English-speaking prisoners.

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Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois’ juvenile and adult correctional facilities. Every year, JHA staff and trained volunteers inspect prisons, jails and detention centers throughout the state. Based on these inspections, JHA regularly issues reports that are instrumental in improving prison conditions.