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November 5, 2009

Richard Wolf  
Executive Director  
NYC Board of Correction  
51 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. Wolf:

I am responding to your September 18, 2009 email regarding the Board of Correction's findings on the Department's inmate visit process on Rikers Island.

The Department's responses are provided below:

### **Inconsistent Information for Visitors**

- **Reported Problem:** Information on the DOC website and the Visitor's Guide regarding acceptable visitor identification does not match information on some signs and recorded announcements.
- **DOC Response:** Information regarding acceptable visitor identification has been made consistent on the DOC website, Visitor's Guide, signs and recorded announcements. Work identification no longer must be supplemented by a current pay stub. School identification no longer must be supplemented by a current class/program schedule.
- **Reported Problem:** Information on the items that can be brought or worn to a jail or visit floor varies and is revised on an ad hoc basis.
- **DOC Response:** Items that can be brought or worn to a jail or visit floor were made uniform for all facilities and recorded on "official" signs that were posted in visit areas throughout the Department. BOC staff was provided with copies of these signs yesterday. All jail issued hand-written signs regarding permissible items have been removed.

### **Visitor Express Program at AMKC**

- **Reported Problem:** Visitor Express Technology performs poorly, resulting in frequent and often lengthy delays.
- **DOC Response:** The Department is continuing to make refinements and adjustments to the Visitor Express Program. This program enables the Department to provide data on visit wait

time and other measures of program performance. Improvements continue to be made to the program.

- **Reported Problem:** Scanning equipment does not always recognize fingerprints of already enrolled visitors, requiring staff to perform time-consuming over-rides. Also, the ID scanning equipment only accommodates IDs of limited size.
- **DOC Response:** The current fingerprint recognition performance at the Visit Control Building is 76%. The Department expects improvements in the system to increase recognition performance to approximately 90%. In instances where the system does not recognize fingerprints, the necessary over-rides take an average of only 10 seconds. This was confirmed by Office of Policy and Compliance (OPC) auditor staff that observed the over-ride process. The over-ride process is not time-consuming. As noted on the tour of the Visit Control Building with BOC staff yesterday, staff manually enters visitor information into the computer in instances where the ID scanning equipment cannot accommodate the size of the ID. These manual entries are not time-consuming and do not cause any added delays.
- **Reported Problem:** Visitor Express technology slows down significantly during the last two hours of the registration process.
- **DOC Response:** The Department's Information and Technology Division is working to diagnose and correct this problem. The BOC will be updated on these efforts.
- **Reported Problem:** The touch screen on the registration kiosk at AMKC operates erratically.
- **DOC Response:** The touch screen was replaced with a more efficient screen, which was demonstrated for BOC staff yesterday.

### **Configuration of Visitor Processing and Waiting Areas**

- **Reported Problem:** Visit lockers in the jails should be accessible to the visitors before the visitors are searched at the jail.
- **DOC Response:** Department and BOC staff discussed this recommendation at length yesterday at the AMKC visit area. Department staff will consider the BOC's recommendation and will respond on this issue at a later date.

### **Coin-Operated and Padlocked Lockers**

- **Reported Problem:** No change machines are available for coin-operated lockers at AMKC. In addition, 15 of the 192 recently installed lockers were broken, lockers were not installed in numerical order and locker keys have loose number tags.
- **DOC Response:** The Department will review the possibility of installing a change machine at AMKC and will respond on this issue at a later date. Currently, only three lockers are inoperable at AMKC. The parts are on order. The lockers have been installed in numerical order and the problem of loose number tags on locker keys was corrected.
- **Reported Problem:** Only 92 padlocks were available for 148 lockers at RNDC.
- **DOC Response:** Padlocks have been made available for all lockers.
- **Reported Problem:** Only 109 padlocks were available for 150 lockers at GMDC.

- **DOC Response:** Currently, 138 padlocks are available for 150 lockers. The Department will continue to reduce the number of lockers without padlocks.

### **Drinking Water and Vending Machines**

- **Reported Problem:** AMKC, RNDC and GMDC do not have drinking water available in visiting areas as required by the BOC Minimum Standards.
- **DOC Response:** Drinking water is now available in the visiting areas of the above referenced facilities.
- **Reported Problem:** GMDC and RNDC do not have coin change machines and their vending machines did not make change.
- **DOC Response:** The Department will review the possibility of installing change machines at GMDC and RNDC and will respond on this issue at a later date. However, OPC staff observed that the vending machines at these facilities do provide change.

### **Seating Capacity in Visit Areas**

- **Reported Problem:** RNDC and GMDC do not have a sufficient number of chairs.
- **DOC Response:** Additional seating was provided at RNDC. A recent inspection of the visit area at GMDC indicated that a sufficient number of seats were available. OPC and Facility Operations, however, will continue to monitor the availability of seating at GMDC.

### **Visit Wait Time**

- **Reported Problem:** Visit wait times are unnecessarily long.
- **DOC Response:** As noted with the Visit Express Program, the Department is moving forward to explore technological and processing innovations that will reduce visit wait time. The Department will continue to update the BOC on the Visit Express Program and other measures aimed at reducing visit wait time.

### **Ion Scan Test Results**

- **Reported Problem:** The ion scan tests serve no security purpose and the Department should reconsider the continued use of ion scan testing.
- **DOC Response:** The Department will respond to the BOC on this issue in a separate letter.

### **Denial of Contact Visits for Inmates who Fail or Refuse Drug Tests**

- **Reported Problem:** The Department denies contact visits to inmates who fail or refuse drug tests in violation of the BOC Minimum Standards.
- **DOC Response:** The Department will respond to the BOC on this issue in a separate letter.

### Air Conditioning in RNDC and GMDC Visit Areas

- **Reported Problem:** RNDC visit areas have no air conditioning and GMDC visiting areas have sporadic air conditioning.
- **DOC Response:** The GMDC air conditioning problem is being addressed with the contractor and should be corrected by May 2010. The Department is taking steps to install air conditioning in the visiting areas of RNDC.

### Sanitation of Visit Area Bathrooms and Availability of Toilet Paper

- **Reported Problem:** Sanitation of bathrooms in GMDC and RNDC is inadequate and toilet paper is not readily available.
- **DOC Response:** Visit area bathrooms will be sanitized every two hours as required. The necessary sanitation supplies will be available. Sanitation of bathrooms will be recorded in logbooks and reviewed by supervisors. Toilet paper will be made available in all bathroom stalls. Facility Operations and OPC will monitor bathroom sanitation conditions in visit areas.

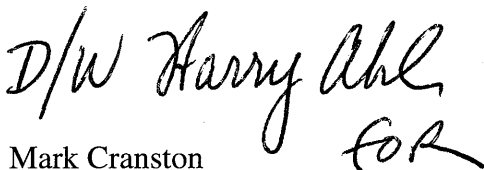
### DOC Staff Interactions with Visitors

- **Reported Problem:** Visitors are allegedly subject to rude or disrespectful treatment by DOC staff.
- **DOC Response:** While the OPC inspection did not reveal rude or disrespectful treatment by staff, the Department is taking measures to improve interaction between staff and visitors. The Department has provided Visit Staff Sensitivity training to staff assigned to all jails and the Visit Control Building. The training covers conflict resolution, customer service values and techniques, use of compassion and understanding as well as the handling of special needs visitors (i.e., blind, deaf, etc).

The Department will continue to work with the BOC to address concerns, monitor the visit process and explore ways to improve the visit process.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the BOC's findings on visits.

Very truly yours,

Handwritten signature of Mark Cranston in black ink, appearing as 'D/W Harry Ahl' with a large flourish and 'for' written below it.

Mark Cranston  
Chief of Staff