



NEWS>>

LOCAL 700 HOSTS RALLY AGAINST VIOLENCE

Teamster Leaders, Members Address Deficiencies at Juvenile Temporary Detention Center

With three Chicago police officers being shot and killed over the past few months and with children losing their lives to gunfire on the city's streets, Teamsters Local 700 hosted a rally to highlight the need to stop the violence.

This epidemic of violence also has spilled onto the grounds of the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center.

Government officials joined JTDC employees and Local 700 leaders in addressing these issues on Thursday, Aug. 12, 2010, at the James R. Thompson Center.

The ever-increasing violence on the streets of Chicago, JTDC employees and Teamster leaders said, is likely correlated to violence occurring at JTDC.

“Under the guise of reducing the detention population, young people are being released from the facility shortly after committing felony offenses,” said Clifford Little, a 21-year veteran JTDC counselor and Local 700 member who spoke at the rally. “The overwhelming lack of discipline within the facility, combined with premature release, tragically misleads the youth into disregarding consequences.”

Children are injuring JTDC employees more than ever before. Children are kicking in thick glass doors and tearing down the ceilings of their rooms; \$3.5 million dollars was spent by the administration in the last six months to repair these damages. Meanwhile, news reports indicate that the youth-related murder rate in Chicago is higher than the rate of soldiers killed at war in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

William P. Logan, Assistant Trustee for Local 700, said the situation at the JTDC is a direct result of the changes being made by JTDC administration, namely the new staff plan, which requires JTDC counselors to pass a test, receive six weeks of training, undergo an interview process and attain a bachelor's degree to keep their jobs.

“The JTDC administration wants to demonize the counselors at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and portray them as scoundrels instead of applauding their service as models of continuity and stability in an otherwise chaotic and unpredictable environment,” Logan said. “These veteran counselors bring experience, commitment and competence to their profession. This isn't just a job for them; it's a profession that elicits pride and purpose.”



Cook County Commissioner Edwin Reyes, a former Illinois State Trooper, echoed the need for children to have stable adult role models.

“In the end, teachers, police officers, social workers and guidance counselors may be the only person a child has that can make an impact on their life,” said Reyes, the Cook County Commissioner for the 8th District. “Our community needs to support these adults who take on these roles.”

Logan said going forward, the JTDC administration must create effective policies.

“The aggressive behavior exhibited by the juvenile offenders that remains unchecked at JTDC will only fester into greater violence inside and outside of the facility,” Logan said. “We can’t wait for another police officer to be shot. We can’t wait for drive-by shootings to rob mothers of their babies. An established structure, adequate accountability, and defined procedures for the juvenile offenders are paramount. Their futures and the future of the community are at stake.”

“The Teamsters are ready to take a stand against violence, break the cycle of apathy, and empower their members with the tools for change,” Logan said.

Teamsters Local 700, an affiliate of Teamsters Joint Council 25, represents more than 13,000 public employees throughout Illinois.