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VIOLENCE SPIKES AT JUVIE HALLS OF SHAME

By FRANKIE EDOZIEN

September 18, 2006 -- Some 5,973 kids were held in the city's juvenile-detention facilities last year - 721 more than the year before.

And with the increase came a rise in violence inside those facilities.

The Mayor's Management Report - a statistical analysis of city agencies in the 2006 fiscal year - revealed that there were 487 assaults and altercations resulting in injury. Last year, the figure was 350.

And there were 47 assaults on staff, up from 37 in the previous year.

Mishi Faruqee, director of the Juvenile Justice Project with the Correctional Association of New York, said one reason for the increase could be the elimination of an alternative to the detention program that was run by the city's Probation Department.

"You have more young people in detention, and there's no alternative to confinement," Faruqee said.

She said there is "less opportunity for staff to" give each kid the maximum attention. Faruqee said 60 percent of the kids are held for nonviolent offenses, like criminal trespass.

A spokesman for the Department of Juvenile Justice, Scott Trent, said the agency has no influence on the numbers of kids it has to take in. That figure is a result of arrests.

He said they are concerned about the violence.

"We've brought in [groups] to provide crisis resolutions to help the kids make more positive choices," Trent said.

Juvenile Justice operates three secure detention facilities and 18 nonsecure group homes around the city. It costs \$468 a daily to house the residents, who are between ages 7 and 15. Last year, it cost \$439 a day.