



## **PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release

Sept. 12, 2014

# **Union warned DR&C repeatedly of security issues at Allen-Oakwood facility**

Westerville – The union representing the majority of employees in Ohio’s Department of Rehabilitation and Correction is today questioning why the agency did not do more to secure the Allen-Oakwood Correctional Institution after the union repeatedly warned DR&C about major security flaws at the prison.

“While we are proud of the team of Correction Officers and special teams that quickly apprehended the escapees last night, we have serious concerns about security at this facility and why more was not done after we warned DR&C officials about some major security risks,” said Ohio Civil Service Employees Association President Christopher Mabe.

The union has put DR&C on notice about staffing levels being too low and inmate security levels not being adequate at the prison. Two of the inmates who escaped Thursday evening had high-level security classifications but were being housed in a unit that had low security inmates in it. In addition, on Wednesday, a day before the escape, union staff at the facility warned DR&C that an escape was being planned. One inmate was put in segregation as a result, but no additional measures were taken to secure the unit.

The union has also raised concerns about a new Tier System that has changed security levels of inmates. Leaders have questioned the placement of inmates into initial security levels as well as the movement of inmates into lower security levels based on good behavior.

“They just aren’t focused on security here like they need to be,” said Shawn Gruber, an OCSEA Board Member and Correction Officer at the institution. “Our job is to protect our staff, family, friends and the community, and they’re making our jobs harder.”

The facility also suffers from persistent low staffing levels. Since the Allen and Oakwood Correctional Institutions merged, 13 Correctional Officer posts were cut at Oakwood, leaving the Oakwood unit with a skeleton crew on all shifts. An additional 10 posts were cut at the Allen unit. On a daily basis on each shift, Correction Officers from Oakwood

are moved to assist the main complex at Allen. In addition, Correction Officers are being pulled from their posts every day to assist with kitchen sanitation as a result of the deficiencies with the Aramark prison food contract.

In 2009, security posts in three towers at Allen were cut as well as all outer perimeter posts. “The towers and the perimeter are the last line of defense for security,” said OCSEA’s Corrections Assembly President Jimmy Adkins. “We used to have an armed area patrol that checked the outer perimeter. But those posts have been closed. They also closed the towers.”

Instead of funding security posts, DR&C has shifted resources to create non-security positions, such as unit managers. In addition, DR&C is in the planning phases of more major changes that the union fears would reduce security further.

“We have got to get back to the basics of security or we will continue to put our officers and communities in harms way. DR&C has to do more to secure our facilities. There are no excuses now,” said Mabe.

OCSEA represents 30,000 state employees, including 8,000 members in DR&C. For more information contact Sally Meckling, 614-865-2602 or 614-404-3881 (cell).

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