

# Sexual Abuse Annual Report 2024

**Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003**

## Introduction

The overall mission of the Department of Public Safety (DPS) is to improve the quality of life for North Carolinians by reducing crime and to safeguard and preserve the lives and property of the people of North Carolina through prevention, protection and preparation with integrity and honor.

NCDPS employees within the Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) focus on at-risk youth and juvenile justice issues across the state. JJDP operates juvenile detention centers, which temporarily house youth alleged to have committed a delinquent act or to be a runaway, or those awaiting trial in Superior Court. JJDP also operates youth development centers (YDCs), which are secure facilities that provide education and treatment services to prepare committed youth to successfully transition to a community setting.

The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (PREA) was enacted by Congress to address the problem of sexual abuse and sexual harassment of persons in the custody of U.S. correctional agencies. The Act applies to all public and private institutions that house adult offenders, residents, or juvenile offenders, and is also relevant to community-based agencies. The PREA National Standards were promulgated in August 2012. These standards established nationwide consistency in practices covering the areas of detection, prevention, reduction, and punishment of prison rape in confinement facilities.

NCDPS is committed to a zero-tolerance standard of any personal misconduct between employees and residents. We are committed to providing professional and appropriate services to our juvenile population and supporting staff in accomplishing these responsibilities. JJDP is committed to the reduction and prevention of juvenile delinquency by effectively intervening, educating and treating at-risk and justice-involved youth to strengthen families and enhance public safety. PREA fits perfectly with that mission. Each employee is vital to the prevention and detection of resident sexual abuse or sexual harassment to protect juveniles and safeguard our communities.

Pursuant to PREA National Standards §115.88, §115.288 and §115.388 data review for corrective action, the agency prepares an annual report of its findings and corrective actions for each facility. This report summarizes and compares the agency's accomplishments during the calendar year 2024.

## Message from the Secretary



Sexual abuse and sexual harassment in confinement settings are unacceptable. The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003 was enacted in recognition of the strong evidence that victims of sexual abuse suffer severe physical and psychological effects that may hinder their ability to reintegrate into the community upon their release and upon a strong belief that sexual safety is a human right and an essential condition of rehabilitation efforts.

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety (NCDPS) is committed to a zero-tolerance standard by maintaining a program of prevention, detection, response, investigation, prosecution, and tracking. As required by PREA National Standard §115.388, this annual report presents a summary of substantiated incidents of sexual abuse in confinement for the calendar year 2024 and the corrective actions taken by the Department in response. This report also provides an assessment of the Department's progress in addressing sexual abuse in the previous calendar year.

NCDPS prides itself on being proactive and focused on prevention to maintain the highest standards of rehabilitative treatment. The Department relies on stakeholders to assist in achieving its zero-tolerance goal and welcomes community partnerships to further its efforts.

Sincerely,



Eddie M. Buffaloe Jr.

## Message from the Deputy Secretary for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



The Division of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP) is committed to the reduction and prevention of juvenile delinquency by effectively intervening, educating, and treating youth to strengthen families and increase public safety. This includes case management services for vulnerable juveniles and juveniles on diversion, and the operation of juvenile detention centers for juveniles awaiting trial. Additionally, JJDP is responsible for the supervision of juveniles adjudicated delinquent and ordered to probation or committed to a youth development center.

In all settings, and at every step of the juvenile justice process, DJJDP is committed to preventing instances of sexual abuse and sexual harassment within our agency. The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 fits with the core of our values, goals, and beliefs, and DJJDP is proud of our ongoing certification as fully compliant with all PREA standards, as determined by federal audit.

Every stakeholder is a crucial asset in assisting the division in the prevention of response to juvenile sexual abuse and sexual harassment and maintaining the professional boundaries that aid in these efforts. The significance of this role can never be understated as the division continues its endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Lassiter".

William L. Lassiter

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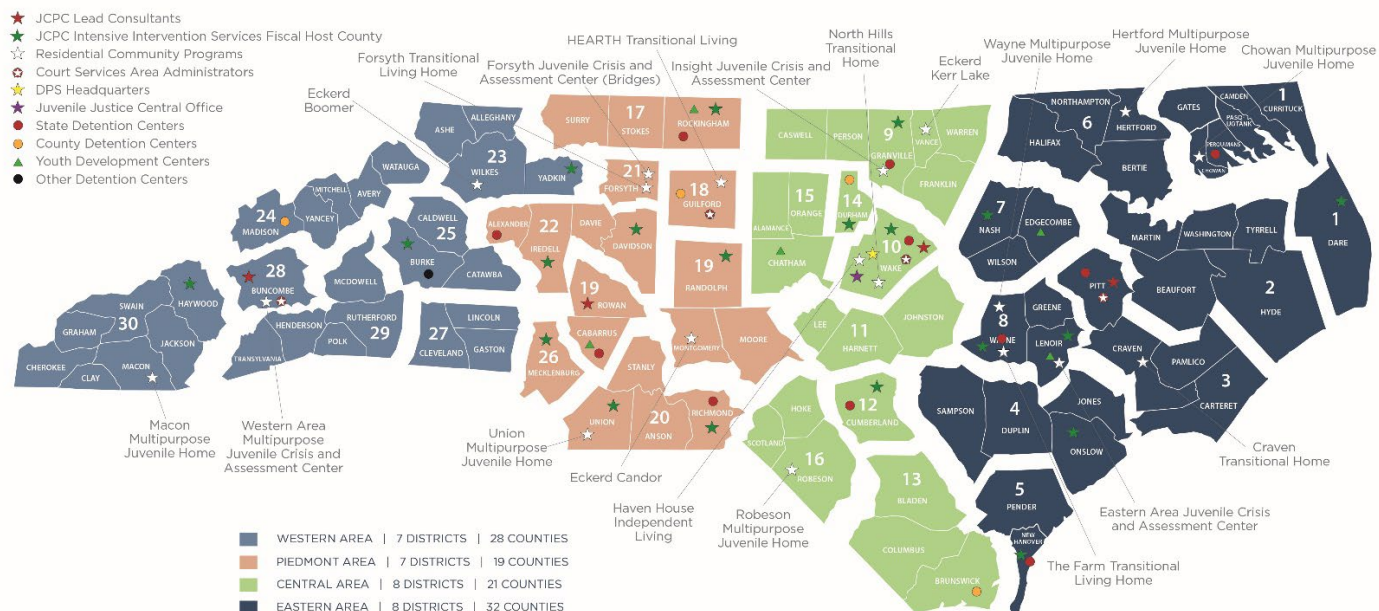
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## Division Overview



## Departmental Accomplishments

1. Coordinated with the DPS Office of Policy, Planning, and Programs, the DPS Department of Human Resources, and other Department stakeholders to implement a seamless process to ensure ongoing compliance with specific standards related to hiring and promotions.
2. Partnered with DPS Communications to customize training content and update printed program materials.
3. Offered site-specific training and consultation upon request.
4. Coordinated with NC DIT to develop enhanced data tracking and reporting capabilities.
5. Developed an enhanced PREA drills program to promote ongoing preparedness.
6. Attended the National PREA Coordinators Conference in Buffalo, NY to gain updated program guidance and best practices.
7. Adopted the use of new e-learning software to improve the quality and responsiveness of training modules.

# Definitions Related to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment

## Sexual Abuse

For purposes of this report and statistical data, sexual abuse includes:

1. Sexual abuse of an offender, detainee or resident by another offender, detainee, or resident; and
2. Sexual abuse of an offender, detainee or resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer.

*Sexual abuse of a resident by another resident includes any of the following acts, if the victim does not consent, is coerced into such act by overt or implied threats of violence, or is unable to consent or refuse:*

1. Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight.
2. Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus.
3. Penetration of the anal or genital opening of another person, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument; and
4. Any other intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or the buttocks of another person, excluding contact incidental to a physical altercation.

*Sexual abuse of a resident by a staff member, contractor or volunteer includes any of the following acts, with or without consent of the resident:*

1. Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight.
2. Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus.
3. Contact between the mouth and any body part where the staff member, contractor or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse or gratify sexual desire.
4. Penetration of the anal or genital opening, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument, that is unrelated to official duties or where the staff member, contractor or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse or gratify sexual desire.

5. Any other intentional contact, either directly or through the clothing, of or with the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or the buttocks, that is unrelated to official duties or where the staff member, contractor or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse or gratify sexual desire.
6. Any attempt, threat or request by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer to engage in the activities described in items (1)-(5) of this section.
7. Any display by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer of his or her uncovered genitalia, buttocks, or breast in the presence of an offender, detainee, or resident, and;
8. Voyeurism by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer. Voyeurism by a staff member, contractor or volunteer means an invasion of privacy of an offender, detainee, or resident by staff for reasons unrelated to official duties, such as peering at an offender who is using a toilet in his or her cell to perform bodily functions; requiring an offender to expose his or her buttocks, genitals, or breasts; or taking images of all or part of an offender's naked body or of an offender performing bodily functions.

## Sexual Harassment

1. Repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal comments, gestures, or actions of a derogatory or offensive sexual nature by one resident directed toward another and;
2. Repeated verbal comments or gestures of a sexual nature to a resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, including demeaning references to gender, sexually suggestive or derogatory comments about body or clothing, or obscene language or gestures.

# Comparative Data

## 2024: The Department’s Year in Review

During the 2024 calendar year, NCDPS received a total of **thirteen** resident sexual abuse and sexual harassment allegations. The following outlines the total number of incidents reported and the outcome of investigations in 2024.

2024					
Incident Type	Substantiated	Unsubstantiated	Unfounded	Ongoing	Total
Resident on Resident Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	0	0
Resident on Resident Sexual Harassment	1	0	0	0	1
Staff on Resident Sexual Abuse	1	5	3	0	9
Staff on Resident Sexual Harassment	1	2	0	0	3
Total Allegations Received	3	7	3	0	13

New reports received from allegations in previous years may affect data collection.

# 2024 Juvenile Justice Facilities

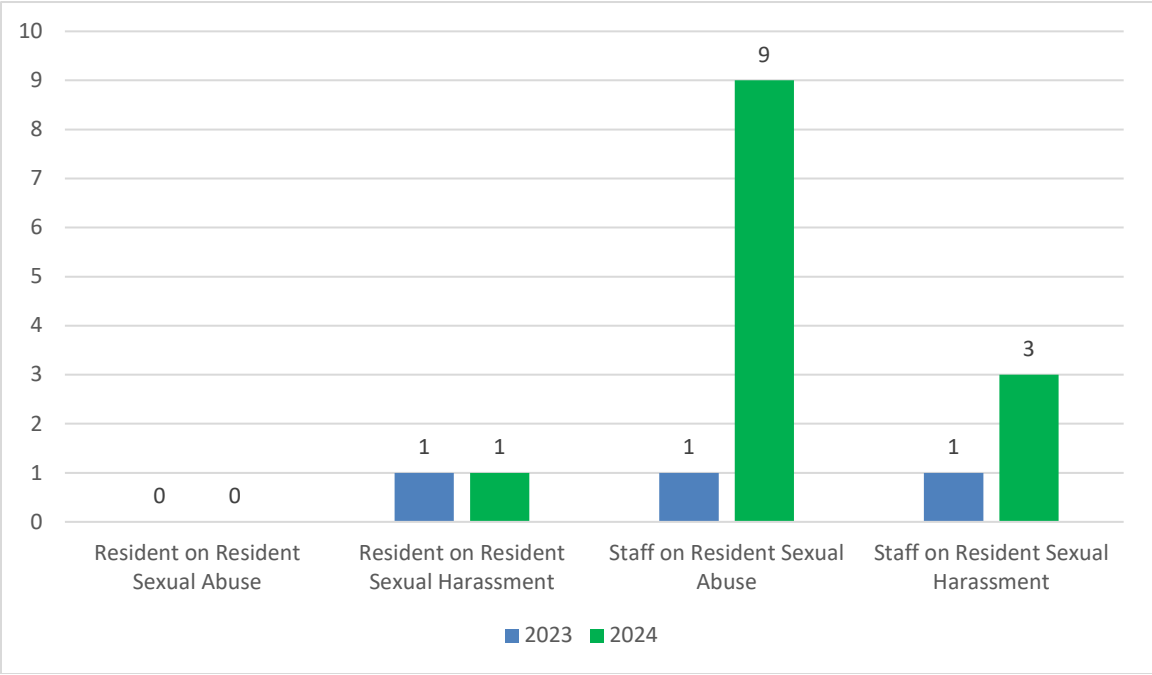
## Substantiated Sexual Abuse Cases with Corrective Actions

Juvenile Justice facilities had **one** substantiated sexual abuse case requiring corrective actions.

2024 Facility	Corrective Action(s)
Edgecombe Youth Development Center	<div><div>1.</div><div>Held a facility meeting to discuss ways to improve general sexual safety in the facility.</div><div>2.</div><div>Reviewed relevant PREA policies with facility staff.</div><div>3.</div><div>Reviewed staff assignment patterns and security protocols.</div><div>4.</div><div>Staff resigned prior to completion of investigation.</div></div>

# Comparison Charts for Years 2023-2024

Figure 1: Juvenile Justice Reported Allegations for Years 2023-2024



The increase in reported allegations of staff-on-juvenile sexual abuse is partially attributable to a shift in program awareness materials which encourages juveniles to report a broader range of incidents. Investigations found only one of these allegations to be substantiated, indicating that the incidence of abuse remains low.

Figure 2: Juvenile Justice Substantiated Incidents for Years 2023-2024

	Resident on Resident Sexual Abuse	Resident on Resident Sexual Harassment	Staff on Resident Sexual Abuse	Staff on Resident Sexual Harassment
2023	0	1	0	0
2024	0	1	1	1

## Audit Findings

The North Carolina Department of Public Safety conducted federal compliance audits during audit Cycle III. Findings from these audits and previous audits for audit Cycle I and Cycle II are available on the agency's website.

## Conclusion

The 2024 annual report speaks to the culture of reporting and zero tolerance fostered by the N.C. Department of Public Safety. The Department remains committed to eliminating sexual abuse and sexual harassment through a program of prevention, detection, response, investigation and data collection and analysis.

The NCDPS is committed to thoroughly, objectively, and promptly investigating every allegation reported. As a result of a comprehensive education and awareness program, bolstered by consistent response and investigative plans, residents are increasingly comfortable reporting allegations and incidents of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Additionally, a strong training program for staff has resulted in a demonstrated improvement in the zero-tolerance culture and investment in prevention, detection, and response protocols.

The Department attributes the increase in allegations received to these improvements within confinement facilities. NCDPS is proud of its improvements in culture, of its policies and procedures, and of its dedication to the elimination of sexual abuse and sexual harassment in confinement.

For more information on this Annual Report, contact the PREA Office at:

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