



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES
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August 16, 2024

TO: Green Hill School Staff & Residents

FROM: Felice Upton *Felice G. Upton*
JR Assistant Secretary

SUBJECT: Green Hill School Update – Aug. 16, 2024

Good afternoon, Green Hill School Staff and Residents:

As you know, we are working hard to address the safety and security issues that are resulting from overcrowding at Green Hill School (GHS). There have been a lot of questions about the recent actions we've taken to address those issues. Beginning today, we plan to share a weekly update every Friday to help keep you informed about this effort.

This week the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) entered into a mutual aid agreement that better allows us to collaborate and coordinate together in this important effort.

When multiple agencies come together to respond to emergency situations like this, they form what is called Unified Command. This structure allows multiple agencies (in this case, DCYF and DOC) to operate under the same organizational structure, towards the same mission. This is why you are seeing DOC employees working alongside our skilled and dedicated DCYF employees.

DOC is involved because they have a team of nationally trained and credentialed incident and significant event managers. This team provides support across the state and country to other agencies and is widely respected for its expertise. This team is not here to run GHS but is here on a temporary basis to collaborate with DCYF on our shared mission to enhance the safety and security of GHS.

Over the next several weeks, Unified Command will focus on specific goals and conditions that contribute to safety. In many cases, this requires a 'back-to-basics' approach of following the proven protocols already in place but not always enforced. Unit leadership will regularly receive guidance and protocol updates to communicate to employees and residents.

This past week, their focus was cleanliness. Cleanliness is an important foundation for a healthy, humane and safe environment. We are so pleased to already see one additional success from this week with the return to using the cafeteria for meals starting this evening. This returns a sense of normalcy to residents who have been without the use of the cafeteria for four years. Additionally, we will be working with updating movement schedules to allow for safe walkways and transitions and evaluating existing processes and procedures for updates or improvements.

We know that current conditions are challenging and will take time to resolve. We have teams actively exploring options for reducing the overcrowding at GHS and are collaborating with legislators on resources for additional facilities. Until we have more space to accommodate more people, safety issues will persist and access to services will be limited. We share your desire to find solutions as soon as possible.

In the meantime, our focus is staff and residents' safety. We are looking forward to positive outcomes from our collaboration with DOC and will continue to communicate with all staff and residents as we move through this process together.

We appreciate your cooperation and patience during this time. If staff have questions, they can address them with their supervisor and residents can reach out to their living unit manager.