

[<<Back](#)

## TYC Considers Changes To Use-Of-Force Policy

Updated: Dec 4, 2007 08:02 AM



The [Texas Youth Commission](#) could soon see changes in its use-of-force policy after months of pressure from watchdog groups.

On Monday afternoon the agency heard from the public on its standards and proposed reforms.

Current rules recommend that pepper spray be used as a last resort after manual restraint efforts have failed, but changes would allow it to be used before physical contact.

Watchdog group [Texas Appleseed](#) said the proposed change would do more harm than good.

About 3,300 teens, with records of burglaries and murders, walk the halls of TYC institutions across the state each day.

One juvenile corrections officer testified that when he has up to 24 teens, sometimes he needs to use pepper spray before things get out of hand.

"There's not a lot of situation where you have adequate backup in what you need to do," said juvenile corrections officer Rodney Rowch.

The corrections officer added that without pepper spray, he doesn't feel safe doing his job.

"We basically have a radio and a telephone," Rowch said. That's all you have as far as any kind of defense you have. Other than that, you don't have anything but your own wits."

The agency said the rule changes would clarify for officers when they should use pepper spray.

"The old policy, the policy we are operating under today, is somewhat nebulous as far as the order the occurrence of pepper spray versus physical restraint," said TYC spokesman Jim Hurley. "We are trying to clarify, clear those things up."

In October TYC reported there were 218 incidents statewide involving pepper spray. In 2006 the agency reported 193 incidents.

Opponents said the numbers show TYC may be using pepper spray when they shouldn't be.

"The proposed rule, we think, sees a shift in the language away from using it to protect, instead using force as a method to control youth who are noncompliant," said Deborah Fowler of Texas Appleseed.

TYC will review Monday's public comments and is expected to make a decision about changes in use-of-force and pepper spray policies within the next few weeks.



All content © Copyright 2000 - 2007 WorldNow and KXAN. All Rights Reserved.  
For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).