

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/first-juvenile-detention-facility-in-the-u-s-is-certified-prea-compliant>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

It's been more than ten years since Congress passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), and in February, the [Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Center](#) became the first juvenile facility and one of the first correctional facilities of any kind to be certified as PREA compliant. On April 17, Vera will deliver a [webinar](#) on the Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Centers audit experience. The webinar will feature PREA Resource Center Co-Director (and Vera alum) Michela Bowman and Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Center Director Steve Jett.

Under PREA, correctional facilities must be audited at least every three years to be considered compliant with the PREA standards. A PREA audit entails extensive document review, facility tours, and interviews with staff and inmates. If an auditor determines that a facility is not in compliance with all of the standards, administrators have 180 days to take actions that will bring the facility into compliance. The standards require that one third of the facilities operated by an agency (or private organization operated on behalf of an agency) be audited each year. This includes adult prisons and jails, juvenile facilities, lockups, and community confinement facilities. In anticipation of the first PREA audit cycle beginning in August 2013, the [PREA Resource Center](#) (PRC) began training auditors in June 2013. PREA auditors must complete a 40-hour training course delivered by the PRC before becoming eligible for certification by the U.S. Department of Justice. Once certified, they can be hired by facilities to conduct audits.

By volunteering his 90-bed juvenile detention facility to be one of the first correctional facilities in the nation to be audited, Director Jett sent a clear message to corrections practitioners that PREA compliance is attainable. Featured recently on [National Public Radio](#), he said that the audit process is an audit of your culture. It's not a policy audit. While his facility was not in compliance with all 182 standards out of the gate, by the time he went through the audit and corrective action period, his facility had achieved full compliance. In the April 17th webinar, Director Jett will discuss how he worked with staff to embrace the goals of PREA and prepare for the audit, what the audit experience was like, and what actual steps he took during the corrective action period to achieve full compliance with the PREA standards. Vera is honored to showcase the good work that Director Jett and his colleagues have done to create a safer environment for the youth at the Southwest Idaho Juvenile Detention Center.

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