

KIDS BEHIND BARS



PRESS PHOTO/CHRIS CLARK

Relieved to be out: Before health problems forced Susan Hogenson out of her job as a prison guard and onto her Mason County farm, she often would work more than 70 hours a week.

Short staffing, long hours create danger, guards say

► *Current and former youth prison employees say both they and the inmates were put at risk. Officials say the situation is improving.*

SECOND IN A SERIES

By Ken Kolker
The Grand Rapids Press

BALDWIN — Susan Hogenson was watching a college football game on television with young prisoners at the Michigan Youth Correctional Facility when she sensed trouble.
As a guard, she worked alone, armed only with a two-way radio. It was just her and 42 young killers, robbers and

rapists.
From the corner of her eye, she watched a trouble-making inmate lead one of her quieter inmates into a cell on the second floor of the two-tiered housing unit known as D-Pod.
The troublemaker, an 18-year-old from Oakland County, had been “sexually aggressive,” making passes at her and other inmates.
Hogenson said she radioed for help, then called for the prison’s roving backup officer over the telephone, telling him she suspected a rape.
But help did not come, she said.
Instead, she stood at the bottom of the stairs on this Saturday afternoon in October as the aggressive inmate beat the other prisoner. He kicked him hard enough with his prison-issue black tennis shoes to tattoo the side of his head with footprints and give him two black eyes, according to a prison report obtained by The Press.

By the time backup guards arrived 20 minutes later, the attacker had left the cell, tossed a bloody towel into a trash can and walked past Hogenson, she said. She’s certain he raped his victim, an 18-year-old from Macomb County serving time for unarmed robbery.
“Blood was everywhere,” splattered on the walls, floor, toilet, sheets, pillow, Hogenson said.
Hogenson, who quit in February, said she couldn’t have broken up the attack. “No way I was going up there alone,” she said. “When you’re on your own, you’re not going to put your life in jeopardy.”
The youth prison near Baldwin is the state’s first and only privately run prison, where the state sends most of its young, violent offenders, some as young as 14. They can stay there until they turn 20.

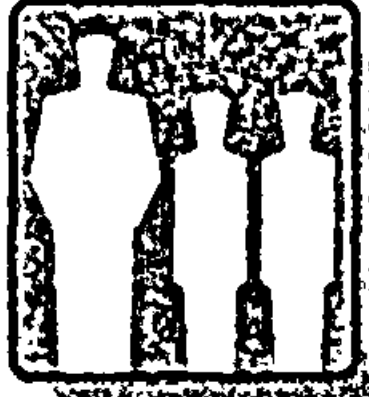
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OUTNUMBERED

The Michigan Youth Correctional Facility near Baldwin, a privately run, maximum-security prison, has far more inmates for each guard than the state’s six maximum-security prisons.

	Guards	Inmates	Inmates per guard
Baldwin	100	330	3.3
Alger	232	528	2.3
Standish	230	509	2.2
Baraga	277	590	2.1
Oak	254	524	2.1
Marquette	283	498	1.8
Ionla Max	267	332	1.2

Source: Michigan Corrections Organization and state Department of Corrections



INSIDE

■ The state’s youngest prison inmate is a Jackson boy, now 14, who murdered his 14-year-old neighbor. **A4**
■ Guards routinely use pepper spray in dealing with prisoners who barricade themselves in their cells. **A4**

SERIES AT A GLANCE

SUNDAY: The new Michigan Youth Correctional Facility near Baldwin is more violent than the state’s six adult maximum-security prisons.
TODAY: Guards fear for their lives in the youth prison. They say understaffing leaves some shifts open and makes 70-hour work weeks common.
TUESDAY: A 15-year-old boy shares a cell with a 20-year-old robber and he’s raped.
WEDNESDAY: Nearly three-quarters of the juveniles in prison are minorities. Some cry racism.
THURSDAY: Two teen-age killers need help. But are they getting it?