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Ex-jailer arrested for juvenile smoke breaks

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Posted: Friday, May 4, 2012 5:45 pm | Updated: 5:48 pm, Fri May 4, 2012.

By Mauricio J. Cuellar Jr.

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Cruz Calderon

By Mauricio J. Cuellar Jr.
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Duval County Sheriff's investigators arrested an ex-juvenile detention center employee for allegedly allowing juveniles to smoke at the facility.

Cruz Daniel Calderon, 21, was a correctional officer at the Ricardo H. Garcia Juvenile Detention Center until he was terminated April 11, after an internal investigation uncovered Calderon allegedly taking juveniles outside the facility to smoke cigarettes. The day following his termination, the matter was handed over to investigators with the Duval County Sheriff's Department.

Following their investigation, Sgt. Ricardo Carrillo II arrested Calderon on April 27 for prohibitive substance inside a correctional facility. During Carrillo's interview with Calderon the next day, the former correctional officer said he had taken juveniles outside on a previous occasion to smoke. Calderon was then charged with a second count of prohibitive substance.

Calderon would take the juveniles, ranging in age from 15 to 16 year old, out on a cleaning detail. Following their work, Calderon would take the young boys out the back door of the kitchen area, where there was an ashcan with cigarettes.

Calderon would then go back in the kitchen, light a cigarette and then use the lit cigarette to light the cigarettes of the juveniles.

"They would smoke outside, then after that, he would have them go into the laundry room, where he would spray them with Odor Be Gone, then walk them back to their cells," Carrillo said.

Correctional officials were told of the practice by one of the juveniles, who got upset at Calderon and spoke out on the activity.

Carrillo said correctional officers had been caught in other detention facilities in the area, distributing cell phones and other items. He said turnover at jail facilities can lead to incidences like this taking place.

"Their having trouble getting employees, and sometimes you want to get the spaces filled," Carrillo said of the growing need for more correctional officers in South Texas. "And this one was not a good choice."

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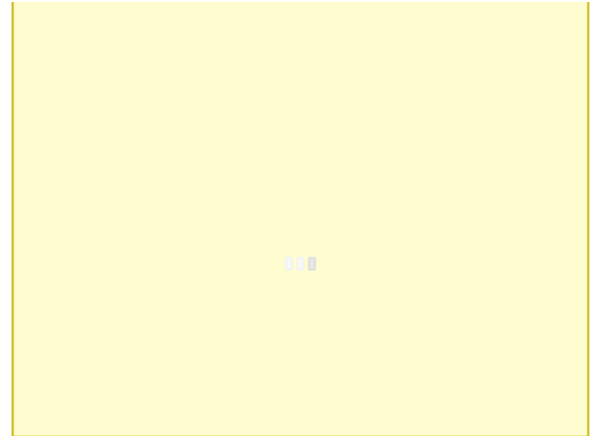
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