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Teen who escaped Ringwood detention center had violent record. He's not the only one

Keldy Ortiz, North Jersey Record | Published 5:41 a.m. ET Sept. 27, 2019 | Updated 7:57 p.m. ET Sept. 29, 2019

A troubled teen who stole an SUV after [escaping from a juvenile detention center should](/story/news/crime/2019/09/10/teens-escape-ringwood-nj-detention-center-steal-car-cedar-grove-nj/2279559001/) not have been allowed at the Ringwood center due to his history of violent crimes.

The incident marked the second time a teen with a violent criminal record entered the facility for non-violent offenders in 2019, authorities said.

"This has been a bad year for them," Ringwood Police Chief Joseph Walker said. "They're a state agency. They seem to be very remorseful."

The 17-year-old unidentified suspect from Newark was caught after fleeing the Green Residential Community Home during the early hours of Sept. 9, Walker said. Details of the arrest were not available, and names of the teens were not released because they are underage.

[Two teens initially escaped from the center](/story/news/crime/2019/09/10/teens-escape-ringwood-nj-detention-center-steal-car-cedar-grove-nj/2279559001/) that day, but one of them, a 13-year-old boy from Camden, was caught on Sept. 10 in Cedar Grove, authorities said.

An agreement between the state and the borough, obtained by NorthJersey.com through a public records request, bars teens with a violent record from being held at the center. Walker said the 17-year-old had an extensive criminal record, which would disqualify him from being at the home.

The residential center, which is on the grounds of Ringwood State Park and serves up to 20 residents ages 13 and 18, is required to tell police and the borough about teens who will be at the facility. The center houses juvenile offenders.

"They didn't go through me or the borough committee," Walker said about the teens with criminal records. "There are times when people slip through the cracks."

PLAYTIME DEBACLE: [Ridgewood parents sue school after their kids are ordered outside for recess](/story/news/bergen/ridgewood/2019/09/25/ridgewood-nj-parents-sue-school-after-kids-sent-outside-recess/2429468001/)

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The borough's Juvenile Detention Center Advisory Committee is made aware only of what teens who enter the facility plead guilty to, not what they are initially arrested for, Walker said.

2019 incidents

On May 23 at 8:20 p.m., borough police arrived at the community home on Sloatsburg Road responding to a report of a teen who assaulted someone before leaving the center, according to a police report. Police were told that the teen punched someone in the arm before leaving.

The teen was later apprehended on Skyline Drive as he was asking for a ride, police said. The teen was previously charged with aggravated assault.

On Sept. 9, two teens escaped through the double front door, according to a police report. One teen was caught in Cedar Grove after crashing a stolen Volkswagen and the other eluded police for another week.

Detention center history



Green Residential Community Home in Ringwood. (Photo: NorthJersey.com file photo)

Between the May and September incidents, three other teens escaped from the facility, authorities said.

Joe Garba, the supervisor for the community home, deferred comment to the state Attorney General's Office, which through a spokeswoman would only confirm the custody of the two teens who escaped.

The state Juvenile Justice Commission's Office of Investigations continues to review the incident, said Sharon Lauchaire, a spokeswoman at the state Attorney General's Office.

In June 2015, three teens managed to get the better of a 71-year-old worker at the community home, authorities said. They swiped the key to his white minivan and escaped with a woman sleeping in the back seat of the vehicle.

Police later found the minivan, and the woman was unharmed, authorities said. The teens, all from Newark, were later caught.

At the time when the incident occurred, Lauchaire said, the state Juvenile Justice Commission was conducting an internal review of safety and security practices.

Since January 2016, 911 hangup calls were made by teens and employees — by accident, according to police reports. No teens escaped until 2019.

"They're very well monitored," Walker said. "It's not something the community should be worried about."

Keldy Ortiz is a breaking news reporter for NorthJersey.com. For unlimited access to all the major news happening in North Jersey, [subscribe here](https://offers.northjersey.com/specialoffer) (<https://offers.northjersey.com/specialoffer>). To get breaking news directly to your inbox, [sign up for our newsletter](https://profile.northjersey.com/newsletters/manage/) (<https://profile.northjersey.com/newsletters/manage/>).

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