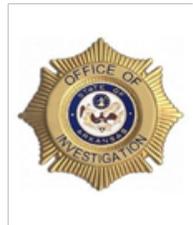




## DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES



**Internal Affairs Investigation Unit**  
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### FINAL INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

**Date: April 1, 2022**

**To: Glenn Holt, Deputy Director, Division of Youth Service**

**From: Brian Settles, Chief Investigator, Division of Youth Service**

**CC: Michael Crump, Director, Division of Youth Service**

**Ref: Rite of Passage (ROP); Allegations of testing irregularities, for (TABE) Test of Adult Basic Education; (GED) General Educational Development Test, both pre-test and the actual GED final test by ROP Educational Department**

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#### **I Allegation:**

On August 30, 2021, Michael Crump, Director of the AR Division of Youth Services, directed the DYS Internal Affairs Investigations Unit to begin investigating allegations of testing irregularities, specifically the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), General Educational Development (GED) pre-test and the actual GED final test given to juveniles at the Alexander Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center (AJATC).

Dr. Marcella A. Dalla Rosa, DYS Educational Superintendent, had voiced concern to Director Crump that ROP Student Athletes (DYS custody juveniles) appeared to be receiving assistance from some ROP education staff when the ROP Student Athletes (SA) had taken either one of the following tests: Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE), the Pre-GED test, or the actual GED test. This assistance, if provided, may have resulted in inflated test scores on the TABE or the Pre-GED. Some juveniles may have fraudulently obtained their GED. Specifically named were ROP educational staff members Ms. Sarah Gober, Ms. Sara Blaylock, and Mr. Clifton "Kris" DeJarnette.

On August 26, 2021, at Dr. Dalla Rosa's request, there was a review of the video showing juveniles taking the TABE test with ROP educational staff member Mrs. Sarah Gober administering the test at Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC). On August 27, 2021, DYS Internal Affairs Investigators Lakeysia Wilson and DYS Compliance Monitor, Ricki Martin reviewed video footage of the TABE test being given the previous day at MJTC on or about 10:30 AM by ROP educational staff member Mrs. Sarah Gober.

DYS Investigator, Lakeysia Wilson and DYS Compliance Monitor, Ricki Martin witnessed (on video) what appeared to be Mrs. Sarah Gober helping a juvenile who was taking the TABE test. Investigator Lakeysia Wilson listened to the audio and heard ROP educator Mrs. Sarah Gober state to a juvenile who was testing, "What would you say if someone asked if I helped you?" The male juvenile's response was, "I would say, no." Mrs. Sarah Gober stated, "Because I would lose my license and you all (the juveniles) would not get your GED's." Investigator Lakeysia Wilson also heard Ms. Gober telling the students, "I have an aunt and her name is Aunt B." This was Mrs. Gober's method of providing the student with the correct answer to the question being read. The video footage of this particular TABE testing session is part of the case log.

## **II (A) Background Investigations: The interviews below were conducted by Investigator Lakeysia Wilson**

### **Student Athlete #1 17- year-old, (SA#1), Rite of Passage AJATC**

On September 9, 2021, DYS Internal Affairs Investigator, Lakeysia Wilson traveled to AJATC to interview ROP SA#1 regarding allegations related to ROP educational GED testing irregularities.

ROP SA#1 stated she had nine high school credits toward her high school diploma prior to pursuing the GED while at AJATC. ROP SA#1 stated the TABE test was a paper test, and she was not sure of the date she took the test. ROP SA#1 stated the TABE test was administered in the Education Building, in a classroom located on the short hallway. ROP SA#1 stated she did not take any classes to prepare for the TABE test. ROP SA#1 stated both testing proctors, Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober, administered the TABE test. ROP SA#1 stated she could not recall what sections of the TABE testing were administered by Mrs. Sarah Gober and which sections were administered by Mrs. Sara Blaylock.

ROP SA#1 stated she does not remember what date she started taking the GED Ready tests. ROP SA#1 stated the GED Ready test was also administered by proctor Mrs. Sara Blaylock at AJATC in the education building on the short hallway. ROP SA#1 stated the test was taken on a computer in the educational classroom. ROP SA#1 denied receiving any assistance from Mrs. Sara Blaylock, other than help with one science word. ROP SA#1 stated she did not know the meaning of the word and Mrs. Sara Blaylock told her what the word meant. ROP SA#1 stated, "But Ms. Blaylock never provided me with any answers to the GED Ready Test." SA#1 stated the official GED tests were administered in the administration building in the GED testing room. SA#1 stated the proctor was Mrs. Blaylock. SA#1 stated there were two other youth in the room taking the official GED tests, SA#2 and SA#3. SA#1 alleges that Mrs. Sara

Blaylock did not provide her, or SA#2, any assistance. ROP SA#1 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock did provide SA#3 some assistance due to her learning disability. ROP SA#1 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock would read SA#3 a paragraph and the answer choices. ROP SA#1 stated SA#3 had to choose the answer to the questions herself and Mrs. Sara Blaylock did not provide her any assistance with the answers. ROP SA#1 stated she did not observe, or witness, any unethical GED testing practices by Mrs. Sara Blaylock, ROP GED testing proctor. The interview was concluded and there was no additional information reported.

**Student #4, 18-year-old, (SA#4), Rite Passage AJATC**

On September 9, 2021, DYS Internal Affairs Investigator, Lakeysia Wilson interviewed SA SA#4 regarding allegations related to ROP education GED testing irregularities.

SA#4 stated he actual started his GED testing while at the Crawford County, Arkansas, Adult Education Center then he transferred to Fort Smith Adult Education. SA#4 stated he had already taken the TABE tests and most of the GED Ready tests, except math while at Fort Smith Adult Education Center before he was committed to AJATC. SA#4 stated that the only part of the GED Ready testing series he had taken at AJATC was math.

SA#4 stated he provided AJATC educational staff with his GED log-in information and staff members were able to pull up his GED history from his Fort Smith Adult Education account. SA#4 stated after his previous GED information was verified two weeks later, he was able to take the official GED tests. SA#4 stated that on three sections of the test, Mrs. Sara Blaylock was the proctor. SA#4 stated on two sections of the test, both Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober were testing proctors.

SA#4 stated there were four other students taking their GED tests, SA#5, SA #6, SA#7, and SA#8. SA#4 alleged that Mrs. Blaylock and Mrs. Gober provided the following youth with constant help which included given them the answers: SA#5, SA#6, and SA#8. SA#4 alleged Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober were referring to the assistance they were providing to other students as, "moral support." SA#4 alleged that he and SA#7 did not receive any assistance from either Mrs. Sara Blaylock or Mrs. Sarah Gober on the GED tests. SA#4 reiterated he did not receive any "moral support," or assistance. SA#4 stated that he does not like handouts and wanted to earn his GED without any assistance. The interview was concluded and there was no additional information reported.

**Student #9, 18-year-old, (SA#9), Rite Passage AJATC**

On September 9, 2021, DYS Internal Affairs Investigator, Lakeysia Wilson interviewed the student regarding allegations related to ROP educational GED testing irregularities.

SA#9 stated that participating in GED classes and obtaining his GED was court ordered by the Pulaski County Judge as part of his condition of release from DYS secure custody. SA#9 stated the TABE test was a paper test, and he could not remember the location, date, or time he took the TABE tests. SA#9 told me I would have to obtain that information from the AJATC education department.

SA#9 stated as he could recall, the GED Ready series of tests, were taken in the administration building in several locations. SA#9 stated one proctor was in the room. Sometimes it was ROP educational staff member, Mrs. Sara Blaylock. Other times, it was another ROP educational staff member. SA#9 stated neither Mrs. Sara Blaylock nor Mrs. Sarah Gober ever provided any of the students answers to the GED Ready tests. SA#9 stated that all students who took the test with him were no longer at AJATC.

SA#9 stated both Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober only offered, “moral support” for example, “by challenging them to think about the question.” SA#9 reiterated that neither Mrs. Blaylock, nor Mrs. Gober provided him, or the other students, any answers to the official GED tests. The interview was concluded and there was no additional information reported.

**Student #10, 17-year-old, (SA#10), Rite of Passage AJATC**

On September 9, 2021, Internal Affairs Investigator, Lakeysia Wilson interviewed SA#10 regarding allegations related to ROP educational GED testing irregularities.

SA#10 stated he did not have any high school credits and as a result he would have been still classified as an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at his home school. SA#10 stated he started taking TABE tests sometime in April 2021 and could not remember the exact date. SA#10 stated the TABE test was a paper test. He stated part of the test was administered by Mrs. Nelson in her classroom. SA#10 stated Mrs. Nelson told him, “I cannot help you with the test.” SA#10 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock administered the other part of the TABE test in the administration building. SA#10 stated Mrs. Blaylock did not provide him with any assistance, or answers, to the TABE test.

SA#10 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober administered half of the GED Ready tests and Mrs. Sara Blaylock administered the other part. SA#10 reported three other students took the GED Ready tests at the same time with him. SA#10 stated neither proctor, Mrs. Sara Blaylock or Mrs. Sarah Gober, provided any moral support, assistance, or answers, to the GED Ready tests. SA#10 stated even when he attempted to ask a question, both proctors, Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober, advised him and the other juveniles present that they could not assist or help with the test.

SA#10 stated the official GED tests were administered in the administration building and three other students were present. SA#10 stated there was one proctor in the room

administering the tests. Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober would come in every so often just for observation purposes. SA#10 stated he asked Mrs. Sara Blaylock if she could help him with a question and Mrs. Sarah Gober immediately intervened advising Mrs. Sara Blaylock she could not provide any assistance to him. The interview was concluded and there was no additional information reported.

### **Student #6, 16-year-old, Student Athlete (SA#6) Rite of Passage AJATC**

On September 9, 2021, DYS Internal Affairs Investigator, Lakeysia Wilson, traveled to AJATC to interview SA#6 regarding allegations related to ROP educational GED testing irregularities.

SA#6 stated he had not attended school much when he was in the community. SA#6 stated when he did attend school in the community, he did not do any work. SA#6 stated he was always getting suspended or kicked out of his community school for various reasons related to his behavior and conduct.

SA#6 stated he was committed to DYS custody on March 11, 2021, and immediately took the TABE tests a week after being moved from the intake/assessment unit to a general population dorm. SA#6 stated he was administered a paper version of the TABE test. SA#6 stated he had taken the TABE when he was in Bentonville Juvenile Detention Center. SA#6 stated due to the ROP education department not being able to obtain his file, he had to retake the TABE tests. SA#6 stated the TABE test was administered by ROP counselor Mrs. Jamie Joyner in her office. SA#6 stated there were no other students testing, or present at the time he was administered the TABE test. SA#6 denied receiving any assistance from Mrs. Jamie Joyner on the TABE test.

SA#6 could not recall the date he took the GED Ready tests. SA#6 stated the GED Ready tests were administered in the administration building in the educational lab. SA#6 reported there were two or three other students testing, as well. SA#6 stated both youth who tested with him are no longer at AJATC. SA#6 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock was the testing proctor for the GED Ready test. SA#6 denied receiving any assistance from Mrs. Sara Blaylock, or receiving answers to the test. SA#6 reported the only assistance he received from Mrs. Sara Blaylock was receiving study materials to help prepare him for the GED Ready tests. SA#6 informed me he did not witness Mrs. Sara Blaylock assisting, or providing answers to the other two students who were also taking the GED Ready tests.

SA Student # 6 told me prior to taking the GED Ready test Mrs. Nelson helped prepare him for the test. SA Student # 6 stated before testing Ms. Sara Blaylock had already advised him and the other students, she could not help them with the test which is the reason she provided them with study material to prepare.

SA#6 stated the official GED tests were administered by Mrs. Sara Blaylock in the administration building and there was one other student present. SA#6 denied receiving any assistance from Mrs. Sara Blaylock on the official GED test. SA#6 reported the only thing Mrs. Sara Blaylock provided them was a snack and some water. SA#6 stated, "I took the official

GED test by myself without any assistance.” The interview was concluded, and no additional information was reported.

**Student #24, 17-year-old, Student Athlete (SA#24), Rite of Passage AJATC**

On September 9, 2021, DYS Internal Affairs Investigator, Lakeysia Wilson, traveled to AJATC to interview SA#24 regarding allegations related to ROP educational GED testing irregularities.

SA#24 stated she did have some high school academic credits, but she was not sure how many credits she had prior to her DYS commitment. SA#24 stated she could not recall the date she took the TABE tests. According to SA#24, the TABE tests were administered by Mrs. Sara Blaylock in the education building on the short hall. SA#24 said she was the only student taking the TABE. SA#24 denied receiving any answers to the test. She stated she did receive assistance on a definition of a word from Mrs. Sara Blaylock if she did not understand what a word meant.

SA#24 stated she took the GED Ready tests about two days after taking the TABE tests. SA#24 stated the GED Ready tests were taken in the same education building in a class on the short hallway and were administered by Mrs. Sara Blaylock. SA#24 stated she and two other students took the GED Ready tests at the same time, of which only one student is still at AJATC. SA#24 stated Mrs. Blaylock did not provide her with any assistance, or answers on the GED Ready tests. SA#24 stated she is unsure if other youth testing were helped because she was focused on taking her own test.

SA#24 stated the GED test was given in the administration building by Mrs. Sara Blaylock. SA#24 stated there were two other students in the room taking the GED at the same time as herself. SA#24 admitted Mrs. Sara Blaylock did assist her, as well as two other students, in helping them understand a few questions on the test, but she did not provide them with the answers. The interview was concluded, and no further information was reported.

**Student #3, 17-year-old (SA#3), Rite of Passage AJATC**

On September 9, 2021, DYS Internal Affairs Investigator Lakeysia Wilson traveled to AJATC to interview SA#3 regarding allegations related to ROP educational GED testing irregularities.

SA#3 did not know if she had any high school academic credits. She stated her highest grade of completion was the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. SA#3 stated she took the TABE on her assigned unit by herself and there was no ROP educational testing proctor present. SA #3 reported the reason her test was taken on her assigned unit was because she was “homebound,” which means she stayed on the unit for her education. SA#3 stated no staff stayed in the room with her while she was taking the test. SA#3 continued to report that all Mrs. Blaylock did was offer her study material in which she refused. SA#3 stated that after completing her test, she was

informed by Mrs. Blaylock that she passed all sections of the TABE tests, except for math. SA #3 stated she retested on the math section of the TABE three times before passing.

SA#3 stated the following week, after passing the math section of the TABE test, she took the GED Ready tests. SA#3 reported she prepared for the GED Ready tests by studying the GED Ready study materials. SA#3 stated the GED Ready tests were administered by Mrs. Sara Blaylock in the education building. SA#3 stated there were no other students taking the test at the same time. SA#3 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock did not provide any answers to the test. SA #3 stated Mrs. Blaylock only provided her with moral support on English and History sections of the test. SA#3 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock would tell her to read the third paragraph but she would have to find the answer herself. SA#3 stated she passed all four sections of the GED Ready on the first attempt.

SA#3 stated about two weeks after taking the GED ready tests, she was able to take her official GED tests. SA#3 stated the ROP education team had to have a staff meeting first with her mother before enrolling her for the official GED tests.

SA#3 stated the official GED tests were administered by Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober in the administration building. SA#3 stated there were two other students taking the GED tests. One of students is no longer at AJATC.

SA#3 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock did not give her, or SA#1 any answers to the GED tests. SA SA#3 alleged Mrs. Sara Blaylock typed SA#11's entire essay. According to SA#3, SA#11 is no longer at AJATC. This allegation is unfounded.

The interview was concluded, and no further information was reported.

## **II (B) The following interviews were conduct by Chief Investigator Brian Settles**

### **Student #12, 19-year-old, Student Athlete (SA#12), Rite of Passage Harrisburg Juvenile Treatment Center**

On September 7, 2021, Chief Investigator Brian Settles traveled to Harrisburg Juvenile Treatment Center to interview SA#12 regarding allegations of ROP educational GED testing irregularities.

SA#12 stated she had been in DYS custody for approximately fourteen months. She had been housed at Alexander Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center (AJATC) and Harrisburg Juvenile Treatment Center for females. She stated that during her time at AJATC she received her GED.

SA#12 stated she took the TABE tests prior to being committed into DYS custody. She took the TABE in 2019 at Arkansas Northeastern College located in Blytheville, Arkansas. SA#12

advised that she took the TABE approximately three to four times and could not pass the test. SA#12 stated she had trouble passing the math part of the TABE each time.

SA#12 stated she was placed in DYS custody in July of 2020. She stated she went into the GED program a few months after being placed into DYS custody. SA#12 stated she took the GED Ready tests which were given by Mrs. Sarah Gober in the education building at AJATC.

SA#12 stated there were other students in the room taking the GED Ready tests. She told me that during her test, Mrs. Sarah Gober would help her by giving her definitions to some of the words. SA#12 stated that after a few weeks of taking the GED Ready tests, Mr. Clifton "Kris" DeJarnette administered the official GED test to her. SA#12 stated the official test was in the administration building at AJATC and there were two or three other students taking the test with her. Mr. DeJarnette was the only ROP staff member in the room.

SA#12 admitted while she was taking her official GED test, she was once again struggling with the math section of the test. SA#12 stated she had always struggled with math. SA#12 stated she would ask ROP staff member Mr. DeJarnette for help understanding a math problem and he would come over and work the math problem for her on a piece of scratch paper and leave the scratch paper with her. She stated this was repeated multiple times while taking the GED math section. SA#12 stated that while she was taking the official GED test, she witnessed ROP staff member Mr. DeJarnette helping other students in the classroom, doing the same thing with them. SA#12 stated she passed her Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies on her own knowledge; however, if it had not been for the assistance of Mr. DeJarnette providing her with the answers to the math section, she would not have passed or obtained her GED. SA#12 signed a statement on 09/01/2021 that was typed by an unknown ROP staff member.

On 09/07/2021 she gave a signed statement to me.

### **Student #7, 16-year-old Student Athlete (SA#7), Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center**

On September 08, 2021, I traveled to AJATC to interview SA#7 regarding allegations related to ROP educational GED testing irregularities.

SA#7 stated he had been at AJATC for approximately six months. SA#7 stated the highest school grade he had attended while in public school was the tenth grade. When asked how he got enrolled into the GED program at AJATC, SA#7 stated shortly after arriving at AJATC, he was asked by an unknown staff member if he wanted to get his GED.

SA#7 stated that on or around his birthday of April 30, 2021, he took the TABE inside of ROP staff member Ms. Joyner's office which was located inside the education building. SA#7 stated that he failed the Language Arts section of the TABE and re-took the Language Arts section the next day. SA#7 stated he was in the GED classroom for approximately two weeks before he started taking his GED Ready tests and the official GED tests. SA#7 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober administered his tests. SA#7 stated he took all his GED tests

over a two-week time period. SA#7 stated that while he was in the administration building with other students taking his GED tests, he did not receive any help from Mrs. Sara Blaylock nor Mrs. Sarah Gober, nor did he witness any other students receiving help from either of them. The interview was concluded and there was no additional information reported.

**Student #8, 16-year-old, Student Athlete (SA#8), Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center**

On September 08, 2021, I traveled to AJATC to interview SA#8 regarding allegations related to ROP educational GED testing irregularities. SA#8 stated to me that he had been at AJATC for approximately five months prior to this interview.

SA#8 stated that he started the GED program shortly after his commitment time started at AJATC. SA#8 stated he took the TABE tests around May 2021, and they were administered by Ms. Jamie Joyner inside Mrs. Sarah Gober's office which was in the education building.

He said his tests consisted of Math, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts. SA#8 advised that his GED Ready tests were administered by Mrs. Nelson inside the education building and other AJATC students took the GED Ready tests at the same time. SA#8 stated after a few weeks of taking his GED Ready tests, he was administered the official GED tests by Mrs. Sarah Gober in the education building. He stated before the test began, Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she could not help any of the students on their final test, stating she could only give "moral support." He stated that he failed the math portion of the official GED test the first time he took it and so a few days later he retook the math portion and passed it by one point. SA#8 stated he never received any assistance from any staff at ROP while taking his GED tests.

**Student #13 17 years-old, Student Athlete (SA#13), Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center**

On September 09, 2021, I traveled back to AJATC and interviewed SA#13 regarding allegations related to ROP education GED testing irregularities.

SA#13 stated before his commitment to DYS he was in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade in the public school system and had 11 credits going towards his high school diploma.

SA#13 stated he took the TABE tests sometime in March of 2020. He was not sure of the dates. He said he took the TABE tests inside of the education building and the TABE testing was conducted by Mrs. Sarah Gober. He said there were other students inside the classroom during his testing. SA#13 stated that during his TABE testing, he failed the TABE tests the first time he took them. The TABE tests consists of Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, and

Science. SA#13 stated that he retested and passed about two months after failing the first attempt.

SA#13 stated sometime in June of 2020, he took the GED Ready tests inside an educational classroom. The GED Ready tests were administered by ROP educational staff member Mrs. Sara Blaylock. He said he did not pass the math portion of the GED Ready test and returned approximately two days later. He took the math portion of the GED Ready test again and passed this time. SA#13 stated one week after taking the GED Ready tests, he took the official GED tests in the education building. The official GED tests were administered by Mrs. Sara Blaylock. SA#13 stated he never received any type of help, or special privileges, while he was in the GED program at AJATC from any of the ROP educational staff.

**Student #5 16 years-old, Student Athlete (SA#5), Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center**

On September 09, 2021, I interviewed SA#5 regarding ROP education GED testing irregularities.

SA#5 stated that before his DYS commitment, he was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in the public school system. He stated that shortly after being committed to DYS and placed at AJATC, he started the process of obtaining his GED.

SA#5 stated he took the TABE tests inside the education building. He could not recall if Mrs. Sara Blaylock or Mrs. Sarah Gober administered the test. SA#5 stated he was the only student inside the education building at that time he was taking the TABE. SA#5 stated the TABE tests consisted of Math, Science, Language Arts, and Social Studies. He stated after he took the TABE tests, he was unclear how long it was until he took the GED Ready tests in the same subjects.

SA#5 stated after he took the GED Ready tests, it was a couple of days later when he took the official GED tests. SA#5 stated that both the GED Ready and official GED tests were given in the administration building and there were two other students in the room with him while he took the tests. He stated while taking the GED tests, he did not receive any type of assistance from ROP education staff, nor did he witness any other student(s) receiving any type of assistance from the ROP education staff.

**Student #14, 17 years-old, Student Athlete (SA#14), Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center.**

On September 09, 2021, I interviewed Student Athlete Student #14 regarding ROP education GED testing irregularities.

SA#14 stated prior to his commitment to DYS, he was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and was on track to graduate from high school. He was not sure how many high school credits he had earned toward a high school diploma.

SA#14 stated he was enrolled in the GED program at AJATC around May 27, 2021. SA#14 stated he took his TABE tests in the education building in room 107. He stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock and Mrs. Sarah Gober were present in the room while he took the TABE tests. SA #14 stated he passed the TABE tests which consisted of Math, Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies. SA#14 stated he took the GED Ready tests inside the education building with the test being administrated by Mrs. Sara Blaylock. He stated he did not receive, nor need any assistance from Mrs. Sara Blaylock during his tests. SA#14 stated he passed his tests on his own.

**Student #15 16 years-old, Student Athlete (SA#15), Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center**

On September 09, 2021, I interviewed SA#15 regarding ROP education GED testing irregularities.

SA#15 stated he was in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in the public school system before placement in DYS custody. SA#15 stated he had only earned three high school credits while in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. SA#15 stated he probably would not have graduated on time while in the public school system because he was so far behind in his academic studies.

SA#15 stated he was enrolled in the GED program in June of 2021. SA#15 stated he took the TABE test which was a written test in the education building along with two other students. He stated the TABE tests were administered by Mrs. Sarah Gober. SA#15 stated he passed the TABE tests which consisted of the subjects of Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science.

SA#15 stated about two weeks after taking the TABE, he started taking the GED Ready tests. He said the GED Ready tests were administrated by Mrs. Sara Blaylock inside the education building. He stated that while he was taking the GED Ready test, he had on headphones and did not see or hear the other two students inside the room receive any type of assistance from Mrs. Sara Blaylock.

SA#15 stated he took the official GED tests inside the administration building a couple of days after taking and passing the GED Ready tests. He stated he graduated with a GED in August of 2021. SA#15 denied receiving any type of assistance during GED testing.

**Student #25 16 years-old, Student Athlete (SA#25), Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center**

On September 09, 2021, Chief Investigator, Brian Settles, interviewed SA#25 regarding the allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

SA#25 stated he was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in public school in Bentonville, Arkansas. He stated he had just started the GED program at AJATC a few weeks prior to our conversation. SA#25 stated he took the TABE in the education building with Mrs. Sara Blaylock administering the test. SA#25 stated there were two other students also testing. He stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock

“helped” him with understanding certain questions on the TABE; however, he stated he passed most of the TABE on his own.

SA#25 stated that shortly after taking the TABE, he took the GED Ready tests in the administration building. SA#25 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock gave him all the answers to the GED Ready tests. He stated there were three other students inside taking the GED Ready tests with him, SA#15, SA#16, and SA#22. SA#25 admitted to me that SA#15 and SA#16 also received help from Mrs. Sara Blaylock; however, SA#22 did not receive any help from Mrs. Sara Blaylock.

SA#25 stated that during one of their testing sessions, Mrs. Sara Blaylock took all SA#15’s tests while he just sat at the desk. He told me that during one of their last testing sessions, Mrs. Sara Blaylock stated to them that, “too many students were getting their GEDs, and that people were getting suspicious.” She also said, “She was going to wait until some of those students got discharged from the program before she allowed them to take any more of their tests.” SA#25 stated it was a few weeks later when he was going into the administration building to test that Mrs. Sara Blaylock advised him that, “She could not help any of them any longer because too many people were getting suspicious because too many students had been passing and obtaining their GEDs, and that someone from DYS had been watching the cameras.” SA#25 stated everyone in his testing group had obtained their GED, except for him and SA#16.

### **Student #16, 16 years-old, Student Athlete (SA#16), Alexander Juvenile Treatment Center**

On September 09, 2021, I interviewed SA#16 regarding the allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

SA#16 stated he was not sure when he started the program to earn his GED at AJATC.

SA#16 stated he does know that Mrs. Sara Blaylock administered the TABE tests in the education building classroom number three (3). He stated he thought he did pretty good on the TABE tests. SA#16 admitted that while taking the TABE tests, Mrs. Sara Blaylock did help him with some parts of the Language Arts section by helping him read and by giving him help with the definitions and meanings of words he did not understand or did not know. He stated that he did not want to get Mrs. Sara Blaylock in trouble because, “she was a nice lady and helped him get his GED.”

SA#16 stated it was approximately a few weeks later that he took the GED Ready tests that were administered by Mrs. Sarah Gober in Mrs. Henderson’s classroom located in the education building. He stated that Mrs. Sarah Gober did not assist him with his GED Ready

tests. He stated after taking his GED Ready tests, it was a couple of weeks later that he was given the official GED tests by Mrs. Sara Blaylock.

SA#16 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock administered the official GED tests in the administration building inside the education room. He stated at the start of the official GED testing, Mrs. Sara Blaylock advised him that if he did not understand something on the test to flag that portion of the exam and come back to it later if he had time. SA#16 said he was confident he did pretty good on official GED tests. He stated he did not complete the official GED test because of the Language Arts section because the time had ended. SA#16 stated he returned a couple of days later to retake the Language Arts section of the GED test. SA#16 admitted to me that Mrs. Sara Blaylock helped him with the Language Arts portion of the GED test by reading definitions and giving him definitions of words, he did not know, or did not understand, just like when he took the TABE. He stated there were other students in the room with him when he took the GED tests. SA#16 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock provided the other students in his testing group with the same type of help during the TABE and the official GED tests. SA#16 stated he did not want Mrs. Blaylock to get into any trouble because she was a “nice lady” and she tried to help him get his GED.

**Student #17, 17 years-old, Student Athlete (SA#17), Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center**

On September 28, 2021, I traveled to Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) and interviewed SA#17, regarding allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

SA#17 stated he was in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade while in the public school system; however, he did not know how many high school credits he had obtained for him to graduate high school. He stated he wanted to obtain his GED while at MJTC because he felt it would help him.

SA#17 stated he did not receive a lot of GED material to study prior to him taking the TABE tests. He stated that when he would go to class at MJTC he would often just play on the computer or do nothing. SA#17 stated this was the “norm” and students often would just “cut up” in class or destroy things in the classroom at MJTC.

He stated he was not sure of the date, but a teacher came from AJATC to give them the TABE tests. SA#17 identified the teacher as Mrs. Sarah Gober. He stated that Mrs. Sarah Gober got settled in the classroom and passed out the TABE test book and paper. SA#17 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober advised all students in the classroom that she could only give “moral support.” He stated Mrs. Sarah Gober “winked” at the students after making that statement while passing out the papers and TABE books. SA#17 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober asked if they wanted her to read the questions and read the answers to each question or would they rather do it on their own. He stated the entire classroom wanted Mrs. Sarah Gober to read the answers to the questions. SA#17 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober then stated to the students that if anyone asked if she helped them, they need to say, “no” because she could lose her job and her license if anyone found out. He stated that Mrs. Gober read all TABE questions and answers to the students. SA#17 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober would read the question and when she got to the correct answer her voice would get louder indicating to him that was the correct answer to

the question. SA#17 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober did that throughout the TABE testing. SA#17 stated Mrs. Gober stated during one of the question-and-answer portions of the test that she had an aunt named, "B", indicating that was the correct answer to the question being read out loud was "B." SA#17 stated that other students received more help than others from Mrs. Sarah Gober while taking the TABE tests.

**Student #18, 16 years-old, Student Athlete (SA#18), Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center**

On September 28, 2021, I traveled to Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) and interviewed SA#18, regarding allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

SA#18 stated he had completed the 9<sup>th</sup> grade before being placed into DYS custody on April 25, 2021. He stated when he was in school, he only had earned one credit towards his high school graduation.

He stated he was inside the classroom when Mrs. Sarah Gober entered. SA#18 stated that she came in and gave students their TABE test booklets and started the test. I asked SA#18 if Mrs. Sarah Gober assisted any of the students on their tests. He stated Mrs. Gober did not help anyone on their TABE tests and that everyone took the TABE tests on their own. The interview was concluded, and no further information was provided by SA#18 because he did not want to answer any more questions.

On September 29, 2021, I re-interviewed SA#18 while letting him view the video of him in the classroom with other MJTC students taking the TABE which was administrated by Mrs. Sarah Gober. SA#18 then admitted to the me that he and other students did receive help from Mrs. Sarah Gober during their TABE testing. He stated that Mrs. Sarah Gober gave students the answers to portions of the TABE tests. SA#18 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober advised them that if anyone asked them if they received any help, they were supposed to say, "no" because she could get into trouble. When I asked him why he did not explain this to the me the day before when he was interviewed, SA#18 stated he did not want to get Mrs. Sarah Gober in trouble because she helped him on the TABE and wanted her to come back to help him again.

**Student #19, 17-year-old, Student Athlete (SA#19), Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center**

On September 28, 2021, I traveled to Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) and interviewed SA#19 regarding allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

SA#19 stated he attended GED classes while at Mansfield. He stated while in the classroom, he did not do much classwork and there was a lot of "horse playing" in the classroom amongst other students while staff would just sit back and watch students' horseplay. He stated he was not given a lot of school material to study to help him prepare for the TABE.

He said on the day he was given the TABE, it was administered by Mrs. Sarah Gober from AJATC. SA#19 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober advised them that she could only give them moral

support during the testing session. He stated the classroom wanted Mrs. Sarah Gober to read the entire TABE test because they were not prepared. SA#19 stated while reading the test, Mrs. Sarah Gober would supply students with the answers to the questions by reading the answers to the correct questions very loudly, as a hint that was the correct answer to the specific question. During a section of the TABE, SA#19 stated Mrs. Gober gave the students answers to questions by saying, she had an aunt, and her name was, "aunt B." When asked if this was a hint, or clue specifically given by Mrs. Gober to what the correct answer was, he replied "yes," it was to let the students know that the answer to that question was letter B.

**Student #20, 17-year-old, Student Athlete (SA#20), Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center**

On September 28, 2021, I traveled to Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) and interviewed SA#20 regarding allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

SA#20 stated he was committed to AJATC around April 28, 2021. SA#20 stated he was transferred to MJTC on May 24, 2021.

SA#20 stated he started the GED program when he arrived at MJTC. He stated Mrs. Sarah Gober came from AJATC to administer the TABE tests. When asked how much preparing for the TABE he had done before taking the test he stated, "not much". SA#20 stated most of the time while at MJTC in the classroom, they would just sit around and do nothing but play or destroy things while staff just sit there watching them do these things. SA#20 stated that there was no teacher at MJTC for months after Mrs. Barbara left.

He stated when Mrs. Sarah Gober came to MJTC to give them the TABE tests, he was in the classroom with other students to take the test. SA#20 stated after the testing process started, Mrs. Sarah Gober did not help any of the students in the classroom. He stated that Mrs. Sarah Gober "only broke down the questions to help them understand" the questions. When asked by me if he received any type of additional assistance from Mrs. Sarah Gober, he stated, "no" and refused to talk any further concerning this investigation. I tried to re-interview SA#20 later, but he refused.

**Student #21, 16-year-old, Student Athlete (SA#21), Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center**

On September 28, 2021, I traveled to Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) and interviewed SA#21 regarding allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

During the interview SA#21 stated he was in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade in the community before he was committed to DYS custody. He stated that the judge over his case had instructed him that he must obtain his GED while he was in DYS custody.

SA#21 stated he was committed to DYS custody and to AJATC on June 29, 2021. He stated on or about 17 days after that, he was transferred to MJTC. He stated shortly after his arrival, he was given his first TABE test by ROP educational staff member Ms. Barbara. He stated that at times, he felt as if Ms. Barbara was not treating him fairly when it came to getting his GED.

SA#21 stated Ms. Barbara would fail him when it was time for him to take his TABE, or not give him the test, or she would say he refused to take the test. He knew he had to go to school for the judge to see his progress. SA#21 stated Ms. Barbara quit teaching at MJTC and they did not have a teacher most of the time. When they went to school it would be a regular ROP staff member in the classroom watching them. He stated when they went in the classroom, they did not do much classroom work. They only played around, or just sat and talked to each other.

SA#21 said it was months after Ms. Barbara left before Mrs. Sarah Gober came to MJTC and administered TABE tests. He stated he felt it was unfair that he had to start all over by retaking the TABE. Mrs. Sarah Gober gave the TABE tests in the classroom and he tested with other students. SA#21 stated during the TABE testing, Mrs. Sarah Gober did not help any of the students in the classroom. When asked by me, if any students received any special assistance like help with words, or the answers to questions, he stated, "no." SA#21 refused to communicate any further with me and answered no other questions, nor did he provide any more information.

**Student #22, 16-year-old, Student Athlete (SA#22), Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center**

On October 04, 2021, I traveled to AJATC and interviewed SA#22 regarding allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

SA#22 stated he was going into the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in high school in the community before his commitment to DYS and placement at AJATC on April 07, 2021. He stated he believed he had only 3.5 high school credits towards his high school diploma, which was not enough high credits, so he wanted to obtain his GED.

SA#22 stated he took the TABE tests around July of 2021, and the tests were administered by Mrs. Sarah Gober inside of Mrs. Jamie Joyner's office located in the education building. He stated the location was quiet and it did not distract him, nor the other two students who were taking the test. SA#22 stated Mrs. Sarah Gober advised the students that she was there for only emotional and moral support. He stated while taking the TABE tests he believed he did okay; however, he admitted he struggled on the Language Arts section of the TABE but passed on his own.

SA#22 stated a few weeks after taking his TABE, he was administered the GED Ready tests by Mrs. Sara Blaylock. He stated the location of the GED Ready testing was in the education building and the tests consisted of Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies. SA#22 stated there were three or four other students in the education building when he took the GED Ready tests. He stated he witnessed Mrs. Sara Blaylock helping other students on their GED Ready tests. When asked by me what he witnessed, SA#22 stated, "Mrs. Blaylock would give students the answers to the questions if they asked for help."

He stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock also administered the official GED tests in the administration building at AJATC. SA#22 stated there were three or four students in the administration

building taking the GED test with him. He stated he witnessed at least two of those students receiving help from Mrs. Sara Blaylock. SA#22 stated Mrs. Sara Blaylock would go help those students by reading the questions and giving them the correct answer to the question. After helping those students, Ms. Blaylock would go back to her desk inside the classroom and wait until someone else needed help. He stated after a few days of starting their GED tests, he and other students returned to the administration building to finish taking the official GED tests. SA#22 stated before the test started, Mrs. Sara Blaylock said she could no longer help them because DYS was watching the cameras and getting suspicious. SA#22 stated some of the other students were upset after Mrs. Sara Blaylock advised them that she could no longer help them with the tests.

**Angela Dawn Stevens, Special Education (SPED) Coordinator, Rite of Passage, Alexander Juvenile Treatment Center.**

On October 04, 2021, I interviewed Ms. Angela Stevens, SPED Coordinator at AJATC, regarding the allegations of GED testing irregularities.

Ms. Angela Stevens stated she was the SPED teacher at Dermott Juvenile Treatment Center (DJTC) until June of 2021, when she was transferred to Alexander as SPED Coordinator, a full-time position. Ms. Angela Stevens stated prior to her arrival to AJATC, she was still working remotely and was conducting Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center's special education responsibilities in addition to her duties at DJTC. Ms. Angela Stevens advised that on numerous occasions, around March or April of 2021, she was prompted by Mrs. Sarah Gober and Mrs. Jamie Joyner from AJATC, to perform dismissal conferences of several students in the SPED program so they could enter the GED program at AJATC. Ms. Angela Stevens stated she did not question the process at the time with Mrs. Sarah Gober or Mrs. Jamie Joyner. She stated she did not have knowledge of the dynamics revolving around the AJATC GED program until her full-time arrival to AJATC in June of 2021.

Ms. Angela Stevens stated once she assumed her educational duties at AJATC, she noticed and wondered why so many SPED students were removed out of the SPED program and placed into the GED program. Ms. Angela Stevens stated that several of her students started to request to leave the SPED program and go to the GED program because students knew they could get their GED faster. She stated that it was rumored that staff were aiding students in obtaining their GED by providing help. Ms. Angela Stevens stated she began questioning why so many of her former SPED students who were in her class and had experienced difficulties passing their SPED exams started getting their GEDs. She noticed they appeared to be passing their GED tests at an alarming rate, faster than other GED track students.

Ms. Angela Stevens stated she reached out to the DYS Education Unit and spoke with Dr. Wayne Foster by phone in mid-March regarding her concerns. Ms. Angela Stevens stated Dr. Wayne Foster advised she and Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield, ROP AJATC District Principal, that no students should be removed from the SPED program without DYS pre-approval, a SPED formal exit conference being held in the appropriate timeframe, and related documentation completed. Ms. Stevens understood that Dr. Foster meant for those students enrolled in SPED

program to be removed from the program she had to perform an exit conference and get the Educational Programming Change Form document(s) signed by all involved parties from both ROP and DYS education officials.

Ms. Angela Stevens stated that students who needed SPED services in her classroom were students who typically are very low functioning and could not pass any of their SPED assignments. Ms. Stevens stated ROP Counselor Jamie Joyner and ROP education department employee Mrs. Sarah Gober requested in June of 2021, to have multiple students' exiting conferences performed so those students could be removed from the SPED program and be enrolled in the GED program. Ms. Stevens said those exit conferences occurred after those students had already been removed from the SPED program and had been placed in the GED program. She believed some of those students had already possibly obtained their GED certificates. Ms. Angela Stevens stated those students' paperwork would reflect the date and time they were transferred from the SPED program to the GED program.

**Sarah Allison Blaylock, Rite of Passage, Paraprofessional, Alexander Juvenile Assessment Treatment Center**

On October 05, 2021, I traveled to AJATC to interview Rite of Passage Paraprofessional Sarah Blaylock regarding the GED testing irregularities.

Ms. Sarah Blaylock stated she started at Rite of Passage on February 25, 2021, in the SPED classroom with Ms. Stevens. Ms. Sara Blaylock stated she was only in the SPED classroom for a short period of time before she moved to the GED program. Mrs. Sarah Blaylock stated once she went to the GED program, she did not receive a lot of training and basically learned what she learned on her own. She stated the only training she obtained was how to correctly log students into the GED program on the computers and how to obtain their passwords and IDs, along with how to log their information down. Mrs. Sarah Blaylock stated as a paraprofessional, she would only act at the direction of Mrs. Sarah Gober, or Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield, ROP AJATC Principal, when it came to testing students.

Ms. Sarah Blaylock stated she would give all the tests to students from the TABE, GED Ready, and official GED tests. Mrs. Sara Blaylock stated on some occasions, there were other ROP educational staff that would give certain tests to students, namely Mrs. Sarah Gober, Mr. DeJarnette, and Ms. Jamie Joyner. Mrs. Sarah Blaylock stated that she was not given a schedule of when students were to test in the classrooms Her instructions were simply to administer the test.

When asked by me about testing locations at AJATC, Mrs. Blaylock stated that when she would administer the TABE to GED track students, it was normally given in any location within the education building. She stated for example, it could be given to students inside the office of a teacher's room or in a dorm. There was no set location to administer the TABE tests. She stated when it was time to give students the GED Ready tests, they were administered inside an education classroom because the GED Ready test did not require the

same software as the official GED test. She stated that the only computers on campus at AJATC that had that GED test software were in the administration building in the GED room.

I asked Mrs. Sara Blaylock if she knowingly ever provided any type of assistance, or gave the answers, or helped any of the AJATC GED students pass their TABE or GED Ready tests, or the official GED test. Mrs. Sara Blaylock denied ever giving any type of assistance to the students at AJATC. When asked if she ever advised student(s) that she could not help them because “someone” was watching the cameras now and that “someone” was suspicious of the GED program, Mrs. Sara Blaylock denied ever giving any type of assistance to the students taking any of those tests. Mrs. Sara Blaylock stated she only gave “moral support” to the students during testing. When asked by me what her definition of moral support was, Mrs. Sara Blaylock stated she would only encourage students to do their best and to go back to a question if they had time and did not understand something. Mrs. Sara Blaylock stated she did not ever give any students the answers to any of the TABE, GED Ready tests, or official GED tests.

The interview was concluded, and no additional information was reported.

A few days after the interview was concluded, Mrs. Sara Blaylock resigned from her position as a paraprofessional at AJATC. I was not provided a reason for Mrs. Blaylock’s resignation from AJATC.

### **Sarah Gober, Certified Teacher**

On October 08, 2021, I met with Mrs. Sarah Gober at DHS central office in downtown Little Rock, AR regarding allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

During the interview, Mrs. Sarah Gober stated that she taught in Arkansas Public School systems for thirty-one years as a licensed teacher before her employment with Rite of Passage (ROP) in 2017. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she started out as a teacher for ROP at AJATC, then moved around to various teaching positions while employed for ROP. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she was no longer employed by ROP. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she was currently employed at Arkansas Adult Education and was teaching there under a grant. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she left ROP because she saw an opportunity for her to get back into the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System and this would add to her years of service before she retired.

While employed with ROP, Mrs. Gober stated she was the GED teacher and would administer TABE, GED Ready tests, and official GED tests to students. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated sometimes other educational staff members at ROP would assist in giving students one or more of the tests, or part of one or more of the tests. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated educational staff members Mr. DeJarnett, Mrs. Jamie Joyner, and Mrs. Sara Blaylock were the other teaching staff members who would administer all or part of those tests. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated during the pandemic, they all were trained to give those tests. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated sometimes students would take the TABE tests on paper and sometimes they would take the tests on the computer. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated that it was Division of Youth Services (DYS)

educational officials who later instructed ROP education officials to move all TABE testing to only paper. When I asked if she could verify which DYS official(s) gave those instructions Mrs. Sarah Gober stated it was information that was provided to her by Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield, Principal at AJATC.

When it came to testing locations for certain tests, Mrs. Sarah Gober stated there was no set locations for students to take the TABE tests prior to COVID and during COVID. She stated that some GED students took the TABE in the education classrooms, or in the teacher's office. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated all students should be monitored during all testing phases by ROP educational staff and direct care staff. She stated she did not give all the tests to students each day. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated there were other ROP educational staff members who administrated GED testing for students. She stated that each educational staff member at ROP was trained on how to administer each test. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she went to Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield, AJATC Principal, on numerous occasions regarding students whom she felt needed to be moved up in the GED testing phase because she felt they had retained enough information to do well on their other tests for them to obtain a passing grade.

Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she always tried to encourage students in the GED program to do their best because they had accomplished a lot to get to that point. She stated she would often have "special sweet treats" on test days for students who did well as an incentive. When asked by me if she had ever given a "sweet treat" to SA#3 during any of her testing sessions, Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she had on one occasion while assisting a new ROP staff member at the time she gave SA#3 "a special treat." Mrs. Sarah Gober stated Mrs. Sarah Blaylock had only been at ROP for a couple of months and she was afraid of SA#3's behavior from past experiences she had with the student in the classroom. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she did not remember what test SA#3 was taking that day. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she had a chocolate candy bar for SA#3. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated that the candy bar was to help keep SA#3 calm during the testing session because of her low attention span and inability to stay focused. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated SA#3 would generally start to develop behavioral issues after a short period of time. She would lose focus, began to act out in class, and become disruptive to other students. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she did not give the whole chocolate candy bar to SA#3 because she knew that SA#3 was a diabetic and if she gave her the whole entire candy bar at one time, it would cause her to start to "shake." So, during the test, Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she would only allow SA#3 to take small bites from the candy bar to help keep her calm during testing. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated that she did not witness any students, nor Mrs. Sara Blaylock helping SA#3 with any sections of her test while in her presence. According to Mrs. Gober, SA#3 remained calm during the test that day.

I asked Mrs. Sarah Gober if she had administered any other tests for other GED students outside of AJATC campus. She stated that she went to Mansfield Juvenile Treatment Center (MJTC) on August 26, 2021, to administer the TABE tests to GED track students. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated that MJTC did not have a teacher on site at the facility for months. She stated MJTC had lost their partnership with their outside GED provider that was providing educational assistance on campus to help prepare students obtain their GED. She stated none

of the GED students at MJTC had been prepared before her arrival and that all of the GED students at MJTC stated to her that they were not ready to test on August 26, 2021.

Mrs. Sarah Gober stated the TABE was not a pass or fail test for students. It was just a formality and the TABE did not matter because students had already been assigned and transferred to the GED program. Mrs. Gober said before she started the TABE she did inform students she could only give “moral support” and she could not help them take the test. She stated she asked students if they wanted to read the test on their own, or if they would prefer her to read the questions and answer choices to them. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated the students preferred her to read the questions and answer choices to them.

Ms. Sarah Gober stated before she starts any test with students, she always makes the same statement to all students whether it’s the TABE, GED Ready test, or official GED test. She can only provide “moral support and she could not help them.” Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she wanted all the students to do their best. On the testing date at MJTC, Mrs. Gober admitted to me she did make the statement to the students that they could not tell anyone she would be helping them, or she would get in trouble, and she could lose her license. Mrs. Sarah Gober admitted to reading the entire TABE and providing answers to questions on the TABE to the students at MJTC. When asked by me if she said, during a section of the TABE test, “she had an aunt and her name was aunt B”, as an indicator for students to mark the answer as the letter B, Mrs. Sarah Gober admitted to making this statement because she stated once again that the TABE did not matter because students at MJTC had already been enrolled into the GED program. Mrs. Sarah Gober stated Dr. Wall-Whitfield, AJATC Principal, knew she was going to MJTC to give those students the TABE and that it was just a formality.

Mrs. Sarah Gober stated she never provided any students in DYS custody at any of its facilities any answers to the GED Ready tests or official GED tests. She stated she did not know of any teachers associated with ROP who provided any answers to any tests given to the GED students.

**Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield. Rite of Passage, District Principal, Alexander Juvenile Treatment Center**

On October 12, 2021, I traveled to AJATC and met with Rite of Passage District Principal, Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield regarding the allegations of the GED testing irregularities.

Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated she has been with ROP for approximately five years and has served as the ROP District Principal for all educational programming at all ROP-operated, secure facilities.

Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated before the COVID pandemic everything was going smoothly with the GED program. Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated after the pandemic began more of the ROP educational staff were out due to COVID and students were ill with COVID. She stated at times there was not a lot of tests being administered and DYS educational officials knew and understood why there was not a lot of testing occurring at the facilities. Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated she would record all the GED students’ progress into the GED electronic

system. Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated she needed more trained staff in GED testing at AJATC. Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated she successfully trained ROP Education Department GED teachers and staff on how to obtain GED student log in identification numbers, how to log students into the electronic GED testing record system, and how to record results after testing.

When asked by me if she could provide a copy of the certificate of completion of training for those ROP teachers/staff members, Dr. Wall-Whitfield stated she could not provide any copies of certificates of completion/training. Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated she had done extra training on GED processes with Mrs. Sarah Gober and Mr. Clifton “Kris” DeJarnette; however, she did not have, nor could she provide the Rite of Passage Staff Training & Development Documentation Form 13.44 to me. Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield did provide me via email, dated October 22, 2021, with information stating that she trained Mrs. Sara Blaylock, Mr. Clifton “Kris” DeJarnette, Mrs. Sarah Gober, Mrs. Jamie Joyner, and Ms. Christy Moore on June 11, 2021, which lasted two to four hours. She stated in the email she could not find the ROP 13.44 form.

Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated she had noticed several “red flags” with the GED process and procedures which she addressed during training dated June 11, 2021. Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated the GED teacher Mrs. Sarah Gober administered more training to Mrs. Sara Blaylock though she was unsure as to the extent of the training Mrs. Blaylock had received because she was a new staff member.

Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield stated all the students’ testing needs should have been monitored more frequently and more closely by ROP educational staff, but ROP staff failed to do so. The interview was concluded and there was no additional information provided.

**Note:** Before the investigation by the Division of Youth Service Investigative Unit, ROP educational employee Mr. Clifton DeJarnette and Ms. Jamie Joyner had resigned from their positions. Mr. Clifton DeJarnette resigned his position as a teacher and Mrs. Jamie Joyner resigned from her position as a counselor from Rite of Passage. Neither were available for interviews.

### **III Substantiated Finds:**

1. ROP educational staff Sara Blaylock and Sarah Gober provided answers to some of the student athletes taking the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE).
2. Rite of Passage Education Department failed to follow proper procedures in submitting the appropriate, correct, and required documentation to the Division of Youth Services Education Department regarding the transfer of special education students from the SPED program to the GED program by Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield, Rite of Passage District Principal.
3. There was poor oversight regarding testing, procedures, protocol, and fidelity by Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield, Rite of Passage, District Principal.

### **III Unsubstantiated Finds:**

1. The DYS Investigative Service Unit could not substantiate that those students who received their GEDs did so fraudulently through a systematic plan to give students answers to the GED test in order for a student to obtain his/her GED.
2. The DYS Investigative Service Unit does not have anyone versed in Arkansas Educational laws, rule, etc., to determine if any Arkansas Department of Education laws, rules, procedures, or protocols were intentionally and willfully violated by ROP Educational Department employees.

### **IV Recommendation:**

1. The TABE, GED Ready Tests, and official GED tests should be conducted in a designated testing room at each facility where there is video camera coverage for transparency purposes. This testing room should be approved by both Dr. Martha Wall-Whitfield, Rite of Passage, District Principal and Dr. Marcella Dalla Rosa, DYS Superintendent of Education. If for any reason the location of these tests needs to be changed, the Division of Youth Service Education Department should be notified immediately of the new location and the new location should have video camera coverage and be approved by the Division of Youth Service Educational Department before testing begins.

**Update:**

1. Since the Division of Youth Services became aware of some testing irregularities, all ROP educational staff directly involved have either resigned their position or been terminated by Rite of Passage.
2. The Division of Youth Services has hired an individual with the specific responsibility to oversee and coordinate all TABE, GED Ready Testing, and administration of the GED test to all students at the facilities.
3. Dr. Marcella Dalla Rosa, DYS Superintendent of Education has established a proper procedure to ensure fidelity to the process for transferring a special education track student from the special education program to the GED track educational program.