



Maryland Department of
Juvenile Services
Treating • Supporting • Protecting

DJS RESPONSE

DJS provided its senior leadership, including the facility Superintendents and its licensed program providers, with the JJMU Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report. DJS thoughtfully considered the reporting and suggestions provided by the JJMU and will take corrective action in areas in need of our attention and response.

There are various areas within the report where we may feel the JJMU either does not have the expertise in a defined area or the understanding of the operations of the facility to adequately identify findings or to make suggestions that will assist DJS in continuing to improve our facilities. For example, on page 21, the JJMU reports that facilities have a certain number and percentage of “staff not fully certified” but they are aware that they are including staff who are provisionally certified in that number. Provisionally certified staff can interact with and supervise youth. And at Cheltenham, for example, many of the “uncertified staff” are new and are currently in Entry Level Training for six weeks. Again, without context or a full understanding of the area, the JJMU miss reporting accurate facts that could help DJS understand an issue and address it. Instead, information is often not understood or is cast in such a way that does not assist our facilities. Because of these longstanding problems with much of the reporting, DJS does not feel these reports are as useful as they could otherwise be. However, we will certainly continue to address any areas identified within the JJMU report that warrant corrective action on our part.

The Department’s successful ongoing efforts to ensure appropriate services and conditions in DJS operated and licensed facilities are ongoing and were recognized during FY 2008 by two significant authorities external to DJS: The U. S. Department of Justice and the Council for Juvenile Correctional Administrators.

During FY 2008 DJS successfully exited from a Settlement Agreement between the State of Maryland and the United States Department of Justice. The Settlement Agreement required substantial compliance with 56 provisions for conditions and services at the Cheltenham Youth Facility and the Charles H. Hickey, Jr. School. The deficiencies that led to a federal CRIPA investigation and to the Settlement Agreement preceded Secretary DeVore’s leadership of DJS. Under Secretary DeVore’s leadership, DJS met all CRIPA standards for safety and security, behavior management, behavioral health care, special education services, and staff training.

In addition, five DJS facilities were recognized for exceptional performance in FY 2008 by the Council for Juvenile Correctional Administrators Performance-based Standards for Youth Correction and Detention Facilities (PbS). The facilities recognized by PbS for achieving Level 3 status in FY 2008 are Backbone Mountain Youth Center, Savage Mountain Youth Center, Green Ridge Youth Center, Meadow Mountain Youth Center, and the Waxter Children's Center detention program.

Following is a summary of the many positive, progressive activities going on throughout the state in all of the DJS run and licensed facilities. Whenever possible, we asked the facility Advisory Board Chairs for their input on how they think their respective facility has performed throughout 2008. All Advisory Board members have access to observe DJS facilities and to talk with youth and facility staff, so they have first-hand knowledge of facility operations. We have also included links, when available, to our own internal Quality Improvement (QI) reports. These reports are extremely comprehensive and in great detail outline the areas where our facilities need improvement (and where they are excelling) and how they rate as compared to other facilities across the state. We are confident the information below and our QI Reports offer a clear view of our facilities, our mission and expectations, and our commitment to the children of the State of Maryland.

DETENTION CENTERS

Alfred Noyes Children's Center (Noyes)

The Noyes Advisory Board has noted great improvements in the staffing at Noyes, including both direct-care and supervisory staff. Noyes has gone from having a vacancy rate of 40% to consistently maintaining nearly a full complement of staff. DJS was able to allocate 10 additional direct care contracts for Noyes that have been converted to permanent state positions. In addition, Noyes was able to hire a Psychologist.

The Board has also been impressed with the increase in programming for the youth including collaborations with outside organizations and Montgomery County's chapter of the Federation of Families. Events have included holiday celebrations to encourage family participation, arts education, as well as gender-specific programming in which several staff participated and were certified. A staff also was selected for, and completed, DJS' Leadership Development Institute. The Board has been especially pleased with the teachers' efforts to engage the parents of the youth at Noyes through parent information sessions and work to ensure that the education staff have access to ongoing professional development opportunities in partnership with the Montgomery County Public Schools. To read DJS' own internal Quality Improvement report on Noyes, please follow this link: <http://www.djs.state.md.us/quality-assurance/quality-improvement-reports.html>

Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC)

During 2008, great strides were made to reform the largest and most challenged detention facility inherited by Secretary DeVore's administration. By the end of 2008, 20 of the 29 original

provisions under a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice were found in substantial compliance by federal monitors. DJS awarded a contract to the Boys and Girls Club of America, which opened a club inside BCJJC and began 7 day a week programming for the boys detained there. Training in Response Ability Pathways, a specialized approach to de-escalation of conflict, was provided to direct care staff. The total population was lowered by 24 beds, bringing the rated capacity down from 144 to 120 youth. Stays in pending placement were also lowered by weeks and sometimes months, lessening the time the youth were awaiting placement.

High quality mental health services were augmented when DJS contracted for even more staff and services to provide additional therapy and Aggression Replacement Training for the boys detained. In addition, a new classroom and office space began construction to provide even more classroom space for MSDE within the building and markedly fewer school suspensions were noted at the end of 2008. Though challenges remain, DJS is proud of the many improvements at BCJJC and is optimistic for its continued growth and success. To read DJS' own internal Quality Improvement report on BCJJC, please follow this link: <http://www.djs.state.md.us/quality-assurance/quality-improvement-reports.html>

Charles H. Hickey Jr. School (Hickey)

The year 2008 was a great year for Hickey. The facility was released from federal oversight and successfully came into compliance with 56 provisions of a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice. Highlights included the relocation of the medical suite and re-opening of a larger and more modern infirmary and examination area. Hickey also received a superior performance rating from Quality Assurance for its parent and guardian involvement with their education program.

In addition, the Chairman of Hickey's Advisory Board noted to DJS his impressions of the staff at Hickey; he remarked that they have a great deal of pride in the services they are providing to each student there and clearly enjoy working with the youth. He commented that the facility is clean and well run and the school facilities are excellent and thoroughly engaging for the students. He remarked on the "Special Incentive Rooms" where youth can watch sporting events and enjoy games and food by earning points through good behavior. And he also gave kudos to the medical staff and the new medical facilities; he commented that being at Hickey may be the first time some youth have had the availability of quality medical and dental care to restore their oral and physical health. The Advisory Board is active and has many exciting projects on its list to continue to expand on Hickey's successes. To read DJS' own internal Quality Improvement report on Hickey, please follow this link: <http://www.djs.state.md.us/quality-assurance/quality-improvement-reports.html>.

Cheltenham Youth Facility (CYF)

2008 was also a landmark year for Cheltenham. CYF, along with Hickey, was released from federal oversight and successfully came into compliance with a settlement agreement with the Department of Justice. A new infirmary and medical suite opened offering cleaner and more modern facilities for the youth needing medical and dental care. On a recent visit to the facility,

the Chairman of Cheltenham's Advisory Board commented on the great strides that the facility has taken toward providing a more comforting and therapeutic environment for the young men at CYF. He was complimentary about the administration and the professionalism and passion that staff showed in their work with DJS' youth. He was also very impressed with the vocational programs that were taking place at the facility such as the graphic arts program and woodshop. He felt the instructors were not only giving the students work skills as it related to the particular craft, but also life skills, educating them on how to use the work skills gained in their everyday life. To read DJS' own internal Quality Improvement report on CYF, please follow this link: <http://www.djs.state.md.us/quality-assurance/quality-improvement-reports.html>

J. DeWeese Carter Center (Carter)

The year 2008 has been an incredibly successful year for the Carter Center and the facility has been able to fulfill many of the expectations of the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board has been very impressed with Carter's new indoor recreation area, the new MSDE building and school program, and the extra structured programming being provided in the evenings and on the weekends. The Advisory Board President has noted dramatic positive changes within the last six to nine months; there is a sense of pride and enjoyment in working with the youth and the professionalism of the staff is evident. The youth are engaging with the staff in a calm, warm and positive manner. Staffing within the facility has been maintained and the food has also improved greatly. Carter appreciates the positive observations by the JJMU and continues to enjoy its status as the "Miracle in Chestertown." To read DJS' own internal Quality Improvement report on Carter, please follow this link: <http://www.djs.state.md.us/quality-assurance/quality-improvement-reports.html>

Lower Eastern Shore Children's Center (LESCC)

The LESCC has set the tone for how to work with kids in a therapeutic and caring way while maintaining a safe and secure environment for all of the kids they serve. The Advisory Board of LESCC has indicated to DJS that they are very impressed with the staff's ability to work with both male and female populations so effectively and that the youth that have participated in the Advisory Board meetings have been "delightful." One reason for the solid relationships between youth and staff is the experience of the staff; it is considered a great strength to the facility and shows the pride they have in the service they are providing to the youth. The amount of activities and programming have increased over the last year at LESCC as well, to include a 4th of July Celebration, Talent Shows, a Fashion Show, sporting activities with other facilities, family days, and LESCC After Dark. The Advisory Board is active in trying to raise community support and supporting the youth, staff and administration of LESCC. To read DJS' own internal Quality Improvement report on LESCC, please follow this link: <http://www.djs.state.md.us/quality-assurance/quality-improvement-reports.html>

Waxter Children's Center (Waxter)

In February 2008, Waxter held its first annual "Kick off to Success" rally. A new program, "Growing Great Girls" was the focus of the year, with gender-responsive trainings being held with the theme 'Protect, Connect, Respect' and staff learning even more about how girls function

and grow despite sometimes difficult beginnings. Waxter also held a Family Day in August; nearly all of the parents attended and received informational packets from all of the departments and a presentation on the “Growing Great Girls” program. A Mother and Daughter Brunch was also held in October.

The Chair of the Waxter Facility Advisory Board has remarked to the Superintendent on the commitment and dedication of the staff members at the girls’ facility. During Advisory Board meetings, the young women expressed satisfaction with the conditions at the facility and the Board Chair was impressed with the transparency of the facility, opening its doors to visits by members of the Advisory Board and other organizations. Involvement by organizations such as the Junior League, Women's Bar Association, Girl Scouts, and others continues to provide positive and enriching services that help to create opportunities for growth. To read DJS’ own internal Quality Improvement report on Waxter, please follow this link:

<http://www.djs.state.md.us/quality-assurance/quality-improvement-reports.html>

Western Maryland Children’s Center (WMCC)

WMCC continues to excel in providing a safe and positive environment to the youth detained in the Western Maryland region. The facility has what has been described as the most effective behavior management system in the state and continues to provide high quality, prompt and professional nursing care. The leadership at the facility increased programming from 94 hours in the month of June to 235 hours in the month of December. Programming included an after school cooking class and anger management groups among others. The facility is fully staffed in nursing, social work, addictions and education and continues to provide excellent teaching by DJS’ own high quality teaching staff. To read DJS’ own internal Quality Improvement report on WMCC, please follow this link: <http://www.djs.state.md.us/quality-assurance/quality-improvement-reports.html>

TREATMENT CENTERS

Backbone Mountain Youth Center

Green Ridge Youth Center

Meadow Mountain Youth Center

Savage Mountain Youth Center

The President of the Advisory Board of the Youth Centers commented to DJS recently on the progress that is ongoing at the four Western Maryland sites that treat young men from throughout the state. He noted positively that several of the centers have developed a partnership with Frostburg State University (FSU) and that youth regularly attend numerous cultural events and programs there. FSU has responded and opened up their athletic facilities to some of the centers so the youth can swim in an Olympic size pool and use their gym. The centers are regularly called upon to FSU to help set up and tear down special programs and events that take place throughout the year and the boys really enjoy attending these programs after helping the university.

The boys also helped the community in several ways, including the Lonaconing clean up effort, putting up and taking down of Christmas lighting displays at Rocky Gap, and doing trail work at Rocky Gap as well. The centers participated in the Reflections Outdoor Adventure Program, America Corp Volunteer Program, and the Friendsville Cemetery clean up. Garrett Community College has opened up their doors to some of the youth to attend college courses on campus. Many of the youth are passing college classes and earning college credits, increasing their ability to succeed in the future; it is also commendable that there are a number of youth who participate in the GED Program and successfully pass the GED exam.

The other noteworthy accomplishment is the improvement of communication and involvement between the centers and their families. Many days throughout the year, parents are invited to visit their son's center for a special activity such as a picnic. When thirty-nine youth were allowed to go home for a visit over the holidays, all of them enjoyed their visits and returned successfully. Weekend visits have also increased for the youth who are ready to be released which has greatly helped the youths' transitions back to their homes. Follow-up communication and increased and improved transitioning efforts have enabled each youth completing the program to adjust to being home more successfully.

The President of the Board commended the Directors of all the centers for their continued dedication and commitment to the youth assigned to their facility. He feels that the Directors, teachers, and direct care staff at all the centers, along with the personnel from DJS Headquarters, are doing an excellent job working with the youth and preparing them for a more productive and positive way of life.

Victor Cullen Center (VCC)

The Victor Cullen Center (VCC) education team was very proud to open the new school in September 2008. The school developed a six hour school day with subjects to include English, Math, Social Studies, Science, Computer Training, and Library. VCC has a complete GED pull-out program to prepare students to take the exam. In addition, the education team added a Work Force Occupational Transition Specialist for additional transition resources. VCC continues to excel in providing youth with the opportunity to take the GED exam with tremendous success. Since August 2008, VCC has added seven more graduates to the list with an additional five pending results.

During 2008, DJS and VCC also hired a new Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent with tremendous knowledge and experience in working with at-risk youth. VCC also increased safety and security for the youth and community by adding fencing, additional campus outside lighting and a video surveillance system that includes eighty-four fully operational cameras facility wide.

VCC continues to increase communication with each youth's family members and community workers. On December 20, 2008, VCC held a family Christmas gathering. Ninety-eight family members attended and enjoyed a Christmas dinner and presentation that was enjoyed by all. The current Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent are looking forward to a successful 2009 with continued positive outcomes for the young men in the program.

LICENSED PROGRAMS

Allegany County Girls Group Home

In December 2008, the ACGGH welcomed a new Program Director who has prior experience as a therapist in residential settings. Also on board the ACGGH team is the new CEO of the Cumberland YMCA who encourages a strong relationship between the Group Home and that local YMCA. The Girls Group Home will be hosting its first annual Volunteer Day on April 25, 2009. There are plans to repaint the entire interior of the house, upgrade the furniture and implement a Serenity Room. The residents are planning to cook a lunch for the volunteers as well as participate in the activities.

Aunt CC's Harbor House

Aunt CC's Harbor House has made many great strides forward in 2008. In working with the Area Director for Baltimore City and conducting monthly meetings, the partnership between DJS and Aunt CC's has strengthened and admissions to the shelter have increased from 633 in 2007 to 815 in 2008. Another great achievement is that Aunt CC's Harbor House has entered into a partnership with (BARC) "Begin Again Resource Center, Inc." BARC provides mentorship to young adults by partnering with professional adults who desire to become committed mentors and make a difference in the lives of young people in need of direction. Ninety percent of the youth return to their home school and 17 were enrolled in a GED Program. Aunt CC's Harbor House continues to work to expand its ability to provide shelter and compassionate care to Maryland's young people.

Guide Shelter

During 2008, the residents at GUIDE Catonsville Structured Shelter completed over 1,200 hours of community service. The residents have been working with the homeless at both Paul's Place and at Echo House, including giving out clothing, serving food and even providing entertainment. As a result of these experiences, many of the residents have reported feeling a desire to continue to participate in service there, as well as wanting to change their lives for the better. The residents involved in this project showed remarkable improvement in their behavior while at the shelter and built positive relationships with the staff. As a result GUIDE Catonsville Structured Shelter will continue to incorporate these hands-on approaches to community service with the homeless.

Kent Youth Boys Home

The Boys' Home was awarded several Mac computers through a joint grant with Kent County Public School. A computer room was painted and desks were constructed to organize all of the computers for the youth to use for school work. The youth's schoolwork and grades since Sept 2008 until present have been excellent. One resident has gotten straight A's for two terms. Through the generosity of a board member, the new workout/weight room was finished. The youth at Kent participate in two main community service projects on a regular basis. First, Kent

Youth adopted a road that the residents and staff tend, assisting in the maintenance of that area within the community. The young men also go to a local nursing home and spend time with the residents playing Bingo and participating in other activities with them.

Larabee Girls Home

The staff at Larrabee House has welcomed the opportunity to help the girls they serve achieve many goals tailored to their individual needs. One of Larabee's youth graduated from high school last year. Upon graduation, her case manager determined that she was best served in the program and she stayed; she was offered a job at a local nursing home and enrolled in their GNA program. A newer youth is currently studying for her GED exam and wants to seek full-time employment. Currently, Larabee is working with a therapeutic riding program to develop a program for the girls to participate in at their facility and the residents write and produce a quarterly newsletter that includes poetry, drawings, stories, fashion tips, and music facts.

Liberty House

Liberty House has partnered with the Renaissance Center, a community-based, professional counseling service within a large church that offers counseling services that include Mental Health, Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, Crisis Intervention, and Youth and Family Counseling. This augments their standard therapeutic programming in an effort to address some of the more difficult life issues facing the residents. Coinciding with the beginning of the school semesters and the summer break, the Renaissance Center provides group therapy sessions that address Anger Management, Grief and Abandonment, and Stress Management for teenagers in today's challenging world. Additionally, beginning in early 2009, selected residents will be enrolled in a four month "Rites of Passage" program offered by the Men's Empowerment Center, an outreach of Morning Star Baptist Church. The program is designed to develop maturity and a responsible life outlook in adolescent males.

Morningstar/Vision Quest

There has been much good news happening at Morningstar. November marked the beginning of the Fourth Direction Discharge Boards. Each youth who is eligible for discharge must conduct a presentation to their Multi Disciplinary Team regarding what they have learned throughout their program, their Relapse Prevention Plan and goals for the future. Morningstar had their first graduates and it was a big success! January also brought the Winter Congress with the theme of "Striving for Greatness". Educationally based, the congress brought out the best healthy competition in all of the youth. Each direction made a flag to represent the theme of the congress. Flags were proudly carried by the leader of each direction onto the opening circle to kick off the two day event. Along with other events, youth were encouraged to write and participate in a "Poetry Competition" Night. Day two was comprised of Jeopardy, Math Challenges, a History Bowl, and Spelling Bees. Jeopardy took on a special flavor when the staff competed against the youth and even the JJMU monitor joined the staff in this competition. At the conclusion of the two day event, winners were announced at the closing circle. The winning group was rewarded with an all day trip to the YMCA for weight lifting, basketball, and swimming.

The Way Home

Collaborative work by The Way Home clinicians and representatives of the Department of Juvenile Services in preparation for the facility's reopening in April of 2008 have proven to be extremely successful. One of the major goals of the group home (which is for girls between ages 14 and 18) is to construct a highly individualized treatment plan for every girl admitted which considers her unique strengths and clinical needs. The multidisciplinary clinical team implemented a "fast track" for two 18 year olds who had failed and re-offended in other community placements. During their residence at The Way Home, these two residents completed their GEDs, obtained the substance abuse and mental health services necessary for their treatment and enrolled themselves in the local community college. One graduate is in independent living and working at a job close to her apartment, and the other graduate is working full time in her home community.

The membership in the local YMCA has motivated most of the girls to lose weight and "keep fit" and the home's registered dietician gives classes on diet and nutrition. This quarter, the girls will be starting their own business and will be establishing a system-wide recycling effort that will help the environment and allow each resident to earn a "salary." Additionally, the girls are going to do a Welcome Wagon lunch for staff once per month where they will sell a packaged lunch to staff and use the money earned for special activities.

The girls are also organizing a new Community Services Committee which will investigate different types of community services in addition to the soup kitchen where they volunteer and the clothing and food drives they run. Some of the projects under consideration include a farm that houses abused and deserted horses and the local animal shelter that needs volunteer dog walkers. The girls also take care of their pet fish Charlie, Molly and Jaws.