

In the Community

TRANSFORMING OHIO'S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

MINORITY OVER-REPRESENTATION

- ◆ Building upon work by the Governor's Council on Juvenile Justice and following a process created by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, DYS is coordinating with the 14 Ohio counties that have the highest minority youth populations to help them identify and assess the issue of Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), develop a response, and monitor and evaluate their results.
- ◆ Based on the data collected, the Ohio State University Center for Learning Excellence will work with county representatives, the Ohio DMC committee, juvenile court judges and other stakeholders to develop strategies to address local DMC areas of overrepresentation.

KEEPING KIDS CLOSE TO HOME

- ◆ In a continued effort to find alternative placements for lower-level offenders committed to DYS, several Cognitive-Behavioral Centers (CBC) are being planned around the state. The CBC will be comprised of 10-12 bed units and will be staff secure (no fences), intensive, short term programs intended to keep low to moderate risk youth committed to DYS, closer to home and out of DYS facilities. The program would be based on a Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) model with a focus on targeting certain criminogenic risk factors through cognitive restructuring and skill acquisition with an intensive aftercare program.

ADDRESSING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS LOCALLY

- ◆ The *Behavioral Health / Juvenile Justice Initiative (BH/JJ)* has begun in Montgomery, Cuyahoga, Fairfield, Logan, Champaign, Union and Franklin counties. These programs are enhancing the ability for counties to locally serve juvenile offenders with serious behavioral health needs. The evidence-based practices work to provide family-focused care for youth referred by the juvenile courts with a goal to provide more effective behavioral health intervention and to reduce the number of commitments to DYS. As of October 2007, nearly 500 youth were enrolled in one of the programs, of these youth only 2 have been committed to DYS.

STATE-WIDE UNIFORMITY IN ASSESSMENT

- ◆ A State-wide Risk/Need Assessment Tool is also being developed with University of Cincinnati. This tool will be available to every Ohio court to more consistently assess each youth's risk/need level, as well as assist courts in determining local placements and treatment needs, ensuring continuity of care and effectively delivering treatment services

STREAMLINING ADMISSION TO DYS

- ◆ DYS is working with local juvenile courts to develop a streamlined evaluation and assessment process that can be completed before a youth arrives at DYS. This pre-admission testing will allow for a shorter stay in DYS reception and provide the youth a faster transition to their home institution.

While In DYS

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RESOLVING CONFLICT

- ◆ Advanced verbal strategy training has begun for staff within the institutions. This training was developed through the Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management in conjunction with the Ohio Attorney General's office. The training teaches techniques specifically designed to manage the variety of conflicts that occur in our environment.
- ◆ Conflict resolution will become part of the youth's daily experience as social workers, teachers and other staff utilize a simple, yet proven curriculum to equip the youth with conflict resolution skills.

SATURATING THE FACILITIES WITH COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

- ◆ The role of volunteers is being dramatically expanded as DYS recruits and trains hundreds of volunteers from the community to work with youth while they are in DYS facilities and thereafter on parole. Since August 2006, over 28,000 volunteer hours have been logged within the institutions.
- ◆ DYS received a grant through AmeriCorps that has placed AmeriCorps staff at DYS facilities and regional parole offices to recruit community organizations and individuals to work with DYS youth.

MANAGING THE UNITS

- ◆ DYS facilities have implemented the unit management concept to streamline supervision, strengthen treatment teams, and increase safety and programming. Unit Management decentralizes institutions into smaller functioning units as the Unit Manager and Unit Team become the decision makers for their area. This concept increases ownership, decreases grievances and provides for an overall safer environment.

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

- ◆ In collaboration with the University of Cincinnati (UC), DYS is in the process of developing a new security classification system. The security classification system will be complete in the beginning of 2008 and will ensure youth are placed in the appropriate DYS facility, which will in turn improve staff and youth safety and increase programmatic success.

IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATIONS

- ◆ To ensure impartial investigations and pre-disciplinary hearings for cases of alleged excessive use of force, there is a new team of investigators and hearing officers that work on cases for sites other than their assigned worksite. This change in process of assigning staff to conduct investigations and pre-disciplinary hearings will ensure incidents are handled in a fair and timely manner.

While In DYS

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IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- ◆ DYS secured a 5 year \$14 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education. This grant allows us to provide intensive literacy intervention to a subset of our population who are deficient at least two grade levels. This grant has also provided DYS the opportunity to train our education professionals to infuse literacy into every subject.
- ◆ All teaching positions in the DYS school district requiring a Highly Qualified Status are filled with teachers who are Highly Qualified in the subject matter under the No Child Left Behind Act.
- ◆ In January 2008 the DYS school district will move to provide individualized learning environments for all youth via the student learning system. This web-based program will allow each student to be assessed in all core academic areas and will then design an individualized learning curriculum for each student. This will allow each student to work at his or her individual ability level and allow the district to accurately assess student progress. The program also provides the potential for accelerated credit recovery, improving a youth's chances at achieving a diploma.

NATIONAL GRANT FOR MENTAL HEALTH

- ◆ Ohio has been selected as one of four states to participate in the MacArthur Foundation Models for Change Mental Health / Juvenile Justice Action Network Grant. This initiative will focus on system reform in mental health and substance abuse services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system, including DYS. It will assist Ohio's juvenile justice system in developing and implementing improved policies and practices based on the best available research and techniques for mental health and substance abuse services.

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

- ◆ Because of the amount of trauma that our youth have experienced, DYS is working to equip staff with more effective ways of working with a highly traumatized population. We are involved with the Childhood Trauma Task group to identify how trauma can best be addressed with our youth. DYS is also collaborating with Director Kris Buffington of the Cullen Center, which is one of the National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network sites.
- ◆ Staff training on Trauma Informed Care has begun and by the end of 2007, all DYS senior staff, psychology staff, social work supervisors and mental health unit staff will be trained as well.
- ◆ Trauma related programming has begun for the female population utilizing nationally recognized clinician Stephanie Covington's work, with additional programming being developed for the females and males to assist them in managing their own trauma.
- ◆ DYS in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Mental Health in funding the implementation of the curriculum *Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide to Education and Treatment (TARGET)*. This curriculum is a promising practice developed by a nationally known expert in the field of childhood trauma Dr. Julian Ford. It is currently in use in juvenile correctional facilities across Connecticut and Florida. Intensive training will be provided to the selected mental health units over the course of the next year.

While In DYS

TRANSFORMING OHIO'S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

- ◆ Capital funds of \$2.85 million were secured for the FY07-08 biennium with the anticipation of building or restructuring the mental health units.
- ◆ The programming, environment, and staffing are being modified on the male and female mental health units. The new curriculum addresses the specific mental health needs of the population by focusing on stabilization, emotion regulation and the development of coping skills. This program integrates different phases with a richly staffed unit, sensory programs and therapeutic atmosphere. The last phase will focus on preparing the youth to return to general population or for release.

AESTHETICS IN THE UNITS

- ◆ Comfort rooms are being designed for use by youth on mental health units. These rooms, or designated areas, will provide some degree of privacy and quiet where youth can explore the use of many sensory items to assist them in managing stress and developing coping strategies. The rooms will be painted in serene tones and stocked with items that engage the senses such as video rockers, weighted blankets, stress balls, bean bags, and music which can be used by the youth while in the room.
- ◆ General population units are also changing to become less punitive and more normalized by including couches, rugs, richer colors and plant life.
- ◆ Approximately 150 leisure reading books (i.e. Harry Potter and Chicken Soup for Kids) are now available in nearly every housing unit in each DYS institution.

INDIVIDUALIZED TREATMENT

- ◆ DYS is working with A.R. Phoenix Resources Inc., Dr. Alton to select a group of flexible curriculum to use with our youth in order to better meet their individual needs. The curriculum will be administered on a dosage basis which means that we can create program tracks that would benefit youth of all risk levels, lengths of stay and need. We anticipate training on the new curriculum to begin in 2008.
- ◆ An intensive adolescent recovery substance abuse program has begun for female youth at Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility.

JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

- ◆ In an effort to hire the right individuals, a new hiring system for Juvenile Correctional Officers (JCO) has been developed. In addition, an aggressive 2-week 'On the Job Training' has been implemented.
- ◆ The former police-type JCO uniform has been replaced with a blue button-down shirt and khaki pants. The change in the JCO uniform is part of the comprehensive strategy to reduce aggression within the facilities and move toward a more treatment focused atmosphere. Changing the look of the JCO enhances the important role this position plays within our youth-focused environment and unit management philosophy.

Returning Home

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THE PLAN FOR REENTRY

- ◆ DYS released the *Reentry Roadmap: A 25 Point Strategy Toward Restoration*. The Roadmap is a comprehensive approach linking courts, providers and DYS to reentry that starts the day a youth arrives in the DYS system.

INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- ◆ With funding through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), DYS has teamed with local providers to offer life and employment skills for older youth from Cuyahoga, Stark, Franklin, and Hamilton counties. Program staff work with youth to teach job skills and to offer job coaching through a mentoring relationship.
- ◆ The Transitional Education Program (TEP) uses video conferencing to teach youth in DYS facilities life and job skills. Youth who have obtained a GED or diploma have the opportunity to participate in distance learning training twice a week with additional homework on the computer. Follow-up includes email accounts and virtual case management services available to assist youth with employment and other reentry issues.

EASING BACK HOME

- ◆ Cuyahoga county, in partnership with DYS, has established a step-down program for female juvenile offenders. This program works to ease girls back to the Cleveland area by transitioning them from Scioto to private residential facilities, then back home, with family engagement at every stage of care and supervision.

PILOT GANG PROGRAM

- ◆ A pilot program targets DYS youth identified with a gang from the Cleveland region to provide pre and post release services and accountability once released from DYS. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the northern district of Ohio was one of six offices selected by the United States Attorney General's office to participate.

SEX OFFENDER PROGRAMMING

- ◆ The U.S. Department of Justice awarded DYS \$1 million to develop staff-secure programming options for courts to use as an alternative to DYS for sex offenders who violate parole.

STARK COUNTY REENTRY

- ◆ DYS has partnered with Stark County to begin a pilot reentry program that allows for reentry planning to begin before the youth arrives at DYS.