



Department of  
Youth Services

**Message from DYS Director Harvey Reed**

**Happy Thanksgiving**

November 23, 2011

Dear Staff:

Happy Thanksgiving! As we enter the holiday season, please be certain to respond to the needs of the youth in our care with sensitivity. During the holidays, youth are more likely to experience sadness, frustration and anger, especially when there is little contact with family members. We typically see an increase in self-injurious behaviors in youth during the months of December and January.

Remember to look for any changes in the usual behaviors and attitudes of youth. Examples of situations that warrant referrals to mental health staff include the following:

- A normally talkative youth becomes distant
- A calm youth becomes easily angered
- A sociable youth begins to withdraw
- A youth begins to give away personal items

Youth should be closely observed during and following family visitation. Stress on the visiting family members and the youth who will remain at the facility can lead to intense interactions. Remember to continue to treat all visitors with utmost respect and courtesy. Watch youth to ensure that frustrations are appropriately handled. Likewise, parole staff should pay close attention to family dynamics throughout the holiday season.

I wish each and every employee a Happy Thanksgiving! For those staff who work on the holidays, I am especially appreciative of how you express the spirit of the holidays to our youth while fulfilling your work responsibilities.

Harvey J. Reed, Director  
Department of Youth Services