



## Department of Youth Services

### Message from DYS Director Harvey Reed Responses to Employee Questions

December 14, 2011

Dear Staff:

I appreciate those employees who submitted questions last month. I've addressed each one with a response below.

***Q. I have many concerns about having a flat 30 day Revocation period. ORC code 5139.52 gives the Release Authority sole responsibility for requiring the child to stay longer than the minimum 30 day period. Saying that they will give every youth a 30 day Revocation is fitting all of our pegs into the same hole. How does it make sense that a youth who absconds from parole, makes us and the county spend resources to find them, and puts himself in danger, be treated the very same as the youth that shows to his court hearing? What can CBT possibly have to offer a youth when we only have one tool to use?***

A. As noted in the question, Ohio Revised Code 5139.52 dictates that any youth returned to DYS on a revocation shall serve a minimum period of thirty days. It is the assumption that all youth committed to DYS will be released after serving their minimum period of confinement. The same assumption applies to youth committed for a minimum period of 180 days or a youth committed for a minimum period of 365 days. In order to confine any youth beyond their minimum stay, the Release Authority must clearly demonstrate the need in one of four narrowly defined areas: treatment, public safety, the presence of Intervention Time and/or an administrative override.

***Q. How is the flat 30 day revocation period affecting youth placement in residential programs? Youth who need substance abuse programming, or placement at Central Ohio Youth Center, are now realizing that they do not need to complete programs. Most youth would spend 45 days at Bassett House Residential Programming, for substance abuse, as opposed to 90 days at DYS. But now, they have no incentive to attend. Most youth will tell you that DYS time is "easier" than residential programming, because they do not have to put effort into the programming at DYS, they only need to do the time.***

A. The best way for a Juvenile Parole Officer (JPO) to address youth being placed in lieu of revocation is to work with the committing court. The Judge could simply court order the youth to attend a 45-day residential placement.

***Q. Is another facility going to be closed?***

A. There are no plans to close another DYS facility.

**Q. The OYAS was to help us determine the level of risk of our youth on Parole. Parole was also to do an OYAS update after a revocation to DYS so the Release Authority would give the youth an appropriate amount of time to spend in DYS. Currently, the youth's risk on the OYAS does not set their Parole supervision level that is set during a reassessment conference with the supervisor and the Release Authority gives a flat 30 day revocation, regardless of the OYAS score. Why do we need to continue completing the OYAS for paroled youth?**

A. The OYAS is used to determine the youth's level of risk to reoffend and to guide the treatment/supervision dosage of the youth based upon the risk score. Research tells us that high risk youth need more intensive services, and low risk youth need fewer services. As youth move up or down the risk spectrum, it is important they are being served according to their current level. Accordingly, an OYAS reassessment is conducted every six months or after any significant incident. A revocation is considered a significant incident in the youth's life. Additionally, upon return to a DYS facility, the OYAS score is used to help determine the new, initial classification. The OYAS risk score should guide the supervision level for youth on parole. However, the JPO, in consultation with his or her supervisor, has discretion to increase or decrease the level based on tangible evidence to support the change.

**Q. A concern/question is in regard to the situation that prevents social workers volunteering to assist the Youth Specialists at IRJCF.**

A. IRJCF administration fully supports SCOPE/OEA leadership's position that their members will not provide coverage in place of Youth Specialists. Staff are appreciated for their willingness to assist.

**Q. Would it be possible for ODYS to inform the general public on "What we do/experience as an agency" everyday. Such as a commercial ad or a series of articles in major newspapers (with a positive spin on it for us). So when the public hears of us handling youth at various institutions they are not in "Shock Awe" and have sympathy 20 yr old incarcerated youth who spits in an officer face and then is put in his room for a certain allotted amount of time? Basically explain to the people of Ohio that we do not deal with scrawny 13 yr olds with an attitude all the time but some NFL Lineman size youth who do not comply with verbals.**

A. As I communicate with media outlets and stakeholder groups, I will persist in sharing the complexities of the youth we work with as well as the proactive and individualized approaches needed for working with them. As we continue to evaluate current practices for safety, security and accountability of our youth, we must keep in mind that we are dealing with a very complicated population. As you are aware, over 50% of the DYS population is on the mental health caseload, more than half are in need of special education services and many come to DYS with prior history of abuse and neglect and severe drug problems. These statistics do not excuse their behavior but may, in some cases, explain it. We have an obligation to hold youth accountable but at the same time provide them with the services needed to change their delinquent behavior.

**Q. I would like to know why you declined to meet with the 1199 union regarding the social worker retention and recruitment issues that have plagued the department for the past 15 months. A response was sent stating that these issues could be**

***discussed in detail at the next APC meeting that was held on October 18, 2011 and that some interest based solutions could be a topic of discussion. Unfortunately interest based solutions appear to be absent from the table by the folks who are in positions to negotiate such and the same issues have remained as unresolved agenda items for the past 2 years since I have been a delegate.***

- A. Since my appointment as Director in March, I have been able to meet with SEIU District 1199 leadership on several different occasions and was able to attend the APC meeting in April of this year. I believe that Social Workers are an essential part of the treatment team and have valuable knowledge of the youth on their caseload as well as expertise in treatment delivery. It is critical that the youth in our care receive developmentally appropriate, therapeutic and humane treatment that responds to their individual needs. In order to ensure this treatment milieu is possible, Social Workers must be present during the times of day and the week when youth are on the unit.
- Q. Its painfully obvious that staff safety is not a high priority to the current leadership in DYS, your actions show us that, but when we cannot protect weaker younger Inmates from the violence what does this teach them? Today and yesterday two young inmates were jumped and assaulted because they didn't want to be in the gang, what are we to do? It has been past practice to wait until something really bad happens before doing something. I hope and pray that an inmate does not die before the leadership does something about this.**
- A. Staff and youth safety are of the utmost importance. DYS has taken several measures to increase facility safety over the past few months including ensuring the proper level of staffing through a recent staffing analysis, addressing youth idleness, holding assaultive youth accountable through the IDT process, hiring Security Threat Group (STG) coordinators at each site, increasing training and awareness of STG activity and implementing Operation Safety First. Over the next few months, you will also begin to see a focus on "Back to Basics" to ensure that our policies and operations are as safe and efficient as possible. It is crucial that staff contribute to safe work environments through good attendance, adherence to policies and procedures, concern for the welfare of the youth in our custody, commitment to programming and other initiatives and by supporting fellow employees.

Harvey J. Reed, Director  
Department of Youth Services