



## OUR MISSION

The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice protects the public by preparing court-involved youth to be successful citizens.

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# Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK





# OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



In July 2014, the Virginia Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) invited the Annie E. Casey Foundation (“Casey”) to conduct an assessment of Virginia’s juvenile justice system with a particular focus on the use and performance of DJJ’s juvenile correctional centers (JCCs). While the first phase of the assessment was completed in early 2015, the work with Casey has been ongoing, primarily in the form of technical assistance across the agency, including further targeted assessments of DJJ’s work.

Based on the assessments, national research, and considerable staff and stakeholder input, DJJ is transforming the work of the agency to reflect what we have learned. Many of the changes we are making are based on evidence and research on what best promotes success and reduces recidivism rates among court-involved youth. We also recognize that to be successful we must focus not only on the positive development of the young people in our system, but also the positive development and sustainability of the staff who serve them. Accordingly, we must strive in all of the work we do to meet the needs of our youth and staff in the following four areas:

## SAFETY

Youth and staff need to feel safe in their environment and need a sense of physical and emotional well-being.

## CONNECTION

Youth and staff need to feel connected to supportive and caring adults, whether they are family, staff, or co-workers.

## PURPOSE

Youth and staff need to have goals to strive toward, skills to hone, and a sense that they have a valuable role to play in the lives of people and the community around them.

## FAIRNESS

Youth need to perceive their environment and interactions as fair and transparent. They need to be held accountable in a manner proportionate to their offense and offense history, and similar to other youth in their situation. Staff need to feel that they are treated fairly, compensated adequately, and supported in their efforts to meet the expectations of the department.



To reach our goals for both youth and staff, we have developed an agency transformation plan. The plan consists of three core operational strategies as well as a strategy dedicated to sustaining, maintaining, and evaluating our reforms and progress. These strategies will continue to guide the department toward fulfilling our mission of protecting the public by preparing court-involved youth to be successful citizens and members of their communities.

## REDUCE

Safely reduce the use of state-operated JCCs by reforming probation practices, utilizing data and research to modify length of stay policies, and developing successful alternative placements to JCCs.

- Ensure that all court service units across the Commonwealth use evidence-based and best practices from intake through parole, keeping youth in their communities and avoiding placement in secure confinement whenever it is safe and possible.
- Implement and continue to evaluate data-driven Length of Stay Guidelines to improve the balance of public safety, personal accountability, and competency development in length of stay decisions and plans.
- Develop alternative placements that serve youth in the least restrictive environment, closest to home, with rehabilitation and treatment opportunities that address targeted areas of risk, need, and positive development.

## REPLACE

Provide youth across Virginia with opportunities for rehabilitation in the least restrictive setting by replacing large, old JCCs with a statewide continuum of evidence-based services, alternative placements, and new smaller therapeutic correctional settings.

- Develop a statewide continuum of evidence-based services and community-based alternative placements by reinvesting the savings from the downsizing of our JCCs to provide access to a baseline level of necessary and evidence-based services to every court-involved youth in Virginia, regardless of region or geography.
- Partner with local juvenile detention centers to open and operate effective Community Placement Programs in targeted localities across the state.
- Build or renovate new smaller secure facilities that provide the right size, setting, and design to promote our rehabilitative and educational goals.

## REFORM

Expand, improve, and strengthen the services and supports provided to youth in custody both during their commitment and upon their return home.

- Provide rigorous and effective rehabilitative and educational services to youth in state custody with the goals of holding youth accountable, ensuring that youth and staff are in safe and supportive facility settings, teaching responsibility, addressing identified areas of criminogenic risk and need, and helping develop the talents, abilities, and skills necessary to lead productive and healthy lives upon release.
- Deliver comprehensive and ongoing reentry planning during commitment and continue community supervision, support, and services when youth return to the community.
- Strengthen family engagement during commitment to DJJ through family visits and participation in treatment and education decisions.

## SUSTAIN

Sustain DJJ Transformation by maintaining safe, healthy, inclusive work places; continuing to recruit, retain, and develop a team of highly skilled and motivated staff; and aligning our procedures, policies, and resources to support the team in meeting the goals of transformation.

- Create an organizational culture conducive to retaining a high-performing workforce by investing training and other resources in managers and supervisors, developing a fair compensation plan, and providing professional growth opportunities for all employees.
- Ensure organizational continuity by prioritizing initiatives, leveraging data, and aligning areas of work objectives and timelines across the agency.
- Identify and integrate core agency services into an ongoing strategic plan that is supported by training, quality assurance, funding, and work culture.
- Develop and maintain protocols and standard operating procedures that are current, accessible, and reinforced through ongoing training, review, and updates.