



# **Virginia Task Force on Juvenile Correctional Centers**

## **Ideal Configuration of a Youth Correctional Unit**

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**Reform  
Through  
Leadership**



# CJCA's History

**The early 1990s national picture of juvenile justice:**

- **Increased violent crime, “super-predator” predictions, high-profile incidents**
- **Criticism of courts and system, “nothing works,” “get-tough” approaches**
- **Dismantling of laws and policies recognizing the unique needs of youth and differences between youth offenders and adult offenders, transfer laws**
- **National surveys counted the number of residential facilities and number of youths in custody but not how the youths were treated inside the facilities**



# CJCA's Vision

- **Incorporated July 1, 1994 to improve juvenile correctional services, programs and practices and to provide national leadership and leadership development for the individuals responsible for the systems.**
- **CJCA represents youth correctional chief executive officers in 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and major metropolitan counties.**



# **CJCA's Mission Statement**

- To connect, develop and strengthen youth corrections leaders to maximize their capacities to implement and sustain reforms in their systems that will improve outcomes for youth, families and communities.**



# CJCA's Values

- **Continuous learning/Continuous Improvement** – We promote continuous learning, improvement and sharing of knowledge, seeking ways to achieve better outcomes and results.
- **Diversity** – We value the richness of diversity in all its forms, as is represented in our shared communities, employees and the children and families we serve.
- **Rehabilitation/ Positive Youth Development** – We believe that a youth can change and become an engaged, productive and healthy citizen.



# CJCA's Values

- **Parental Engagement** – We will engage, collaborate with and support families as valued partners in youths' rehabilitation.
- **Supportive Communities** – We believe in returning youth to supportive communities in order to achieve their full potential.
- **Collaborations** – We promote collaboration between national organizations, federal and state governmental agencies to improve outcomes for youth, families and communities.



# Major Goal of Youth Corrections Today

- **Positive Youth Development in four domains:**
  - **Academic and Vocational Learning**
  - **Planning for Future Independence**
  - **Social Connectedness**
  - **Health and Well-Being**



# **Profile of Youths Entering Juvenile Correctional Centers**

- Older youths with extensive juvenile justice histories in youth corrections.**
- High risk/ high needs youths.**
- High proportion of youths with mental health disorders.**
- Chronically violent youths.**
- Gang involved youths.**
- Youths with serious educational and vocational deficits.**



# **Ways to Meet the challenge of Treating Type of Youth in Juvenile Correctional Centers**

- Create a positive culture in facilities that consistently provides supportive relationships.**
- Offer meaningful participation in programs.**
- Set high expectations in an opportunity-rich setting where engagement, learning and growth are natural developmental outcomes.**
- Staff are given the tools and training to engage and treat kids in programs.**



# Best Practices for Unit Configuration

- **Build small facilities that are not institutional in character.**
- **Facility to have small housing units (8-12 residents) – results in improved assessment/classification, safety and management.**
- **Ensure normative environment character of unit.**
- **Maximize staff supervision and interaction with residents on unit.**



# Best Practices for Unit Configuration

- **Single occupancy rooms for residents.**
- **Access to natural light and views – view of horizon instead of just sky through skylights.**
- **Open dayroom with contiguous sleeping rooms (clear sightlines for improved supervision).**
- **Single User showers/bathrooms (1 per 8 residents).**



# Best Practices for Unit Configuration

- **Incorporate enough space for on-unit activities (counseling, homework, passive recreation for program flexibility)**
- **Access to outside space for recreation & group activities, e.g., cookout.**
- **Central dining or family style dining is more normative than dining on unit.**
- **Direct supervision staffing 1:8 [day] (PREA 2017); 1:16 [overnight] (with off-unit support staff).**



# Best Practices for Unit Configuration

- **Visiting areas – either on unit, or in other locations in building – ability to give families some privacy.**
- **Separate education building – more normative to leave unit to attend school.**



# Alternative Unit Configurations

- **Double bunked rooms**
- **Dormitory style**
- **Wet rooms**
- **Bi-level units**



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