

A Word from the Director

Greetings,

Over the past decade, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has served over seven thousand juveniles who were committed to the state for delinquent offenses and admitted to direct care. The most effective way to promote public safety with these youth is to hold them accountable while also turning their lives around with rigorous rehabilitative and educational services so they can return home to lead lives as law-abiding and productive citizens.

The data presented in this report show that these youth come to us with significant and complex challenges. Many have had difficult family and home lives, are lagging behind their peers academically, have experienced exposure to various types of trauma, and face significant mental and behavioral health problems. In other words, these youth come to us not just with a delinquent background but with an often complicated set of needs that require intensive services. It is also worth noting that, while definitely having complicated backgrounds, not all youth are committed for violent offenses, or with long and serious delinquent backgrounds. In fact, of those youth receiving indeterminate commitments, a majority are not committed for felonies against persons.

While we are working to develop more options, because of a lack of alternatives, most of the youth that are committed to DJJ's custody are confined in large, secure, juvenile correctional centers that closely resemble adult prisons in appearance.

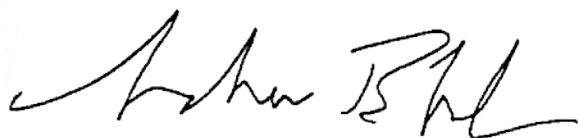
Thankfully, these facilities are staffed by dedicated and talented professionals, and the number of juveniles who walk through our doors has been decreasing: from 951 in fiscal year (FY) 2004 to 439 in FY 2013. While many assume that this smaller population represents what some might call, "The worst of the worst," the truth, as evidenced by the statistics in the book, is more complicated.

For this reason, even as our population becomes smaller, we must continue to strive to make necessary services available earlier in the court process, and to reduce our reliance on confinement for youth who could be safely supervised and rehabilitated in their community. For those youth who still require secure confinement, we need to continually support the staff that work in our facilities, and improve the education and treatment the youth receive.

From probation to confinement to parole, the Department is in the midst of a transformation, but we cannot do it alone. We hope that the data included in this book, provides a greater understanding of our system and the challenges our staff and our residents confront on the road to rehabilitation. We also hope this resource provides our community partners and stakeholders insight into the kinds of services that they need to be providing at-risk youth so they can successfully desist from further offending and deeper court involvement.

Thank you for your work and concern for Virginia's children. We look forward to continuing to work together to provide safer communities and more successful young people.

Sincerely,



Andrew K. Block Jr., Director



Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of committed juveniles, admitted to DJJ's direct care between FY 2004 and FY 2013. Below are general trends and changes that emerged in the juvenile profiles.

Overall Trends, FY 2004-2013

- » An average of 84% of admissions since FY 2004 were indeterminate. In FY 2004, most juveniles had an early release date in six months or less; in FY 2013, most juveniles had an early release date between 13 and 24 months.
- » The average age of juveniles' first adjudication increased from 13.7 to 14.7 years old.
- » The average number of committing offenses increased from 3.4 to 4.0.
- » Based on rankings established by the Virginia Criminal Sentencing Commission (VCSC), the percentage of admissions with a person offense as the most serious committing offense increased from 43% to 50%, and the percentage of admissions with a drug offense as the most serious committing offense decreased from 8% to 2%. Robbery, at 22%, was the most commonly occurring most serious committing offense category.
- » An average of 63% of juveniles were assigned mandatory aggression management treatment during this time period. The percentage of juveniles assigned mandatory or recommended substance abuse treatment increased from 70% to 86%. On average, 10% of juveniles were assigned mandatory sex offender treatment.
- » The percentage of juveniles exhibiting symptoms of a substance disorder increased from 58% to 71%.
- » Juveniles with a history of sexual offending increased from 13% to 18%.
- » In general, the percentage of juveniles with mental health disorders either increased or remained stable. The percentage of juveniles who used psychotropic medications in their lifetime also increased from 57% to 65%.
- » Juveniles' average IQ score increased from 84.7 to 86.6 but remained lower than that of the general population.
- » Average reading and math standard scores decreased from 89.2 to 86.9 and from 85.7 to 80.2, respectively; however, the average writing standard score increased from 78.2 to 87.8 during the same time frame.
- » The percentage of juveniles with special education needs remained stable at around 41%. Juveniles' history of school problems, including the number and severity of those problems, decreased slightly.

Trends by Age

- » Older juveniles' offenses were more likely to be linked to substance use.
- » Younger juveniles were more likely to be assigned mandatory aggression management treatment and mandatory sex offender treatment than older juveniles. Older juveniles were more likely to be assigned mandatory substance abuse treatment than younger juveniles.
- » Younger juveniles were more likely to be taking psychotropic medication than older juveniles.
- » Older juveniles had lower average reading, writing, and math standard scores than younger juveniles.

Trends by Race

- » Black juveniles were more likely to have determinate and blended sentences than juveniles of all other races.
- » A higher percentage of white juveniles had a history of sexual offending compared to juveniles of all other races.
- » White juveniles were more likely to have exhibited symptoms of several mental health disorders and had received more previous inpatient, outpatient, and psychotropic medication services than juveniles of all other races.

Trends by Sex

- » Females were more likely to have exhibited symptoms of several mental health disorders, except ADHD, and had received more previous inpatient, outpatient, and psychotropic medication services than males.
- » More males exhibited symptoms of a substance disorder than females.
- » Males were more likely to need special education services than females. Males also had lower reading, writing, and math standard scores than females.

