



# NEWS

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Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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## **DJJ INVESTS SAVINGS FROM FACILITY CLOSURES INTO NEW EVIDENCE-BASED FAMILY THERAPY PROGRAMS ACROSS VIRGINIA** *Functional Family Therapy (FFT) Makes Family Members Key Part Of Rehabilitation*

**Richmond, VA, Nov. 3** – The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), using the savings realized from closing Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Center earlier this year, is adding Functional Family Therapy (FFT), a highly-regarded evidence-based model, to its growing continuum of community-based services available to court-involved youth in traditionally underserved areas of the Commonwealth.

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is an empirically grounded, well-documented and highly successful family intervention program for at-risk youth. FFT has been applied to a wide range of youth and their families in various multi-ethnic, multicultural contexts. Target populations range from at-risk preadolescents to youth with very serious problems such as conduct disorder, violent acting-out, and substance abuse. While FFT targets youth aged 11-18, younger siblings of referred adolescents also often become part of the intervention process.

FFT is being used in 11 countries and has more than 300 sites serving more than 50,000 families each year. FFT has been conducted both in clinic settings as an outpatient therapy and as a home-based model.

“In almost all cases, a child’s family is a critical part of their life and rehabilitation,” said DJJ Director Andy Block. “And yet, Virginia has lacked evidence-based family interventions in much of the state. With these new programs, and those we will add in the coming months, we will provide highly effective evidence-based programs for high-risk youth and their families, programs which research shows cost less, and gain better outcomes, than incarceration. “

“FFT has proven itself effective time and again, because it targets the known causes of delinquency: family relations, peer relations, school performance, and community factors,” said Valerie Boykin, DJJ’s deputy director of community programs. “One of our key goals as

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## DJJ Implements FFT

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we continue to transform our agency is to keep court-involved youth in their communities, near family support whenever possible, and out of an institutional setting. FFT will play a major part in making this happen.”

The first two FFT teams are located in Suffolk and Petersburg, and include probation and parole referrals from the following cities and counties, all within a 90-minute drive:

- **Eastern FFT Team (Provider: Western Tidewater Community Services Board):** Suffolk, Franklin City, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, Accomack, Northampton, Newport News, Hampton, Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Poquoson, York, City of Williamsburg, James City.
- **Southern FFT Team (Provider: Family Focus):** Petersburg, Dinwiddie, Nottoway, Amelia, Powhatan, Hopewell, Surry, Greensville, Emporia, Prince George, Brunswick, Sussex, Chesterfield, Colonial Heights, Appomattox, Buckingham, Cumberland, Prince Edward, Charlotte, Halifax, Mecklenburg, Lunenburg, Henrico, Richmond, Charles City, New Kent.

Last month DJJ added a similar and equally effective model of family intervention, Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) to its continuum of services. DJJ plans to implement FFT or MST in more than 100 jurisdictions by the end of 2017.

DJJ began a major transformation just over three years ago using research and data to introduce new practices and programs that have proven to provide better outcomes for youth. The transformation includes the development of a continuum of evidence-based services across the Commonwealth for youth before the court. The population of committed youth has dropped significantly in recent years, thus reducing DJJ’s need for correctional center beds. The continuum is being funded in part by reinvestment funds made available through the downsizing of DJJ’s large correctional facilities.

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