



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message from
DJJ Director Andy Block

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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Sharing Our Success With Others

DJJ staff and residents alike played a major role this week in showing five visiting juvenile justice agencies from around the U.S. how transforming an agency such as ours can be done in a positive manner.

The visitors were hosted by the National Governors Association (NGA) to learn firsthand from us about the significant progress we have made toward transforming ourselves to a community-based model of youth rehabilitation.

The NGA's Learning Lab on Alternatives to Incarceration for Justice-Involved Youth allowed representatives of juvenile justice systems in Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to explore strategies that DJJ is successfully implementing for reducing juvenile incarceration by reducing unnecessary out-of-home placements, closing large residential facilities, and using developmentally appropriate approaches and expanding evidence-based alternatives in the community.

"Reforming juvenile justice has been one of Governor Terry McAuliffe's priorities," said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran in welcoming remarks. "With bipartisan support and leadership from legislators, we here in Virginia have enjoyed a great deal of success so far. It is



A Bon Air resident explains how our rehabilitation system has changed to visitors from juvenile justice agencies in Illinois, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Louisiana and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Five Juvenile Justice Agencies Get Firsthand Look At Our Progress Toward Transformation



Left: Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran tells guests how Virginia involved stakeholders in transformation process. Right: Bon Air resident greets visitor.





A Bon Air resident explains the Community Treatment Model system to visitors.

our privilege to be able to share with some of our colleagues around the nation what has worked for us.”

“Under Governor McAuliffe, Virginia has emerged as a real leader in implementing innovative solutions to transform juvenile justice systems nationwide,” said NGA Center Homeland Security and Public Safety Director Jeff McLeod. “The learning lab successfully highlighted how the state budget process can help transform systems; how governors can drive system-wide, sustainable change; and how youth outcomes can benefit from changes in policy, programs and practice.”

Our guests were clearly impressed with our staff and our residents. Here is some of the feedback we received: “What we have seen from Virginia DJJ has crystallized our need to communicate our vision in Illinois loudly and proudly,” said Heidi Mueller, director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice. “Virginia has been able to articulate its vision to stakeholders who are often ignored in a process like this, and make sure all are working effectively toward shared goals.”

“Our biggest takeaway was how well DJJ works together,” noted Rashida Rosario-Daniel of the U.S.

Virgin Islands’ Department of Human Services—Juvenile Justice Unit. “It’s so cohesive. It comes across from the line staff all the way up. To get all the employees on board during the transformation in such a short time – I’ve never seen that. It’s remarkable.”

Attendees learned how DJJ worked in tandem with the McAuliffe administration to garner legislative and budgetary support for the transformation, and how they can use research, statistics, budgetary tools and state and local coordination to create positive

change in the juvenile justice systems and outcomes. Attendees also visited DJJ’s Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center, where they heard directly from some of the residents about how their experience has improved.

The NGA is a bipartisan organization of the nation’s governors. Through NGA, governors identify priority issues and deal collectively with matters of public policy and governance at the state and national levels.

While there is still a great deal of important work to do on our path to reform, we can at this juncture in our journey take a great deal of pride in the fact that the National Governors Association chose to showcase our efforts to other agencies also considering reforms. I remain humbled and grateful for your incredible dedication to our ongoing mission. People around the country are paying attention to what we are doing, and using your great work—both in the community and in our facilities—as an example of what can be accomplished. You have much to be proud of.



From left: DJJ Director Andy Block, Nate Balis of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Bon Air JCC Superintendent Doug Vargo and Bon Air Community Coordinator Rukiya Bellamy congratulate a resident on his presentation.