



# WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

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## Mental Health Clinicians A Boon To CSUs

### *New Positions Helping Kids Get Critical Evaluations Without Long Waiting Period*

Ashely Ryan understands that when a court-involved youth first walks into her office at the behest of the judge, the youth's top priority is usually to finish the required 8-12 sessions as quickly as possible.

That's why she was surprised when five of the approximately 30 Hopewell area kids she has dealt with so far as CSU 6's Mental Health Clinician have actually opted to continue meeting with her, even after completing the required sessions.

"What this tells me about the youth who are referred to me is that I'm someone who won't judge or lecture them, but instead will listen to how they're feeling and provide the additional support they may need at that time," says Ryan, who has been serving as CSU 6–Hopewell's Mental Health Clinician since last February.

Establishing trust: it's an integral part of performing an effective mental health evaluation. An increasing number of CSUs are using clinicians in conjunction with their local Community Services Boards which hire them and then make them available to DJJ, much to the satisfaction of probation officers and judges seeking to find appropriate placement and services for youth without the often lengthy wait for an evaluation to be done.

"Having a clinician has enabled our kids to go to the front of the line," says CSU 6 Director Woody Harris. "Having Ashely is like having a big pair of scissors cutting through red tape. Our judges are very pleased with this level of responsiveness."

CSU 28–Abingdon has two clinicians, Zach Thompson and Megan Sanders, who provide mental health education prevention services to the Abingdon and Bristol offices. In addition to conducting assessments, they provide anger management education and life skills groups.

"The interaction between the clinicians and the probation officers has been very positive," says CSU 28 Director Tricia Davis. "The officers appreciate the opportunity to consult on cases with someone who has expertise in the mental health field, especially for those



Above: CSU 6 staff standing, from left: Senior Secretary Jennie Wells, Secretary Tyriss Tate, Clinician Ashely Ryan, Community Supervision Officer Reggie Simon, CSU 6 Director Woody Harris, Supervisor Tim Beard. Seated: Probation Officer Dee Russell. Not pictured: Intake Officer Carolyn Lilly, Probation Officer Brian Ellsworth, Community Supervision Officer Connie Towns. Right: Mental Health Clinician Ashely Ryan consults with a client in her Hopewell CSU office.



cases which show a treatment need for mental health on the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI)."

At CSU 8–Hampton, Kevin Banks has served as full-time clinician since October, 2014. He reports already having had nearly 150 face-to-face contacts with clients and their families, and has completed 75 mental health screenings.

The "overwhelming demand" for mental health services, according to CSU 31–Manassas Director Jeff Homan, has kept Clinician John Barnes' schedule packed since he started March 30. Barnes splits his time between the Manassas and Woodbridge offices. "Mr. Barnes has been a valuable asset and resource to the CSU," Homan says. "All parties are looking forward to a continued partnership."