



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

May 19, 2016

Reentry Renaissance

\$1 Million In Hard-Earned Grants Already Providing Needed Services

For DJJ Reentry Program Manager Ashaki McNeil, the mission to reform the agency's reentry efforts was as much personal as it was professional.

She knew that meticulous, persistent, evidence-based planning done by a team of DJJ staff and partners who shared the same vision would give Virginia a fighting chance for a significant share of grant funding from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

The first opportunity to show that DJJ was serious about its goal to transform its reentry efforts was presented in October, 2014, when DJJ received a Second Chance Act grant from OJJDP of more than \$60,000 to develop a comprehensive statewide reentry plan. McNeil assembled a task force of DJJ employees, community partners and other child serving agencies who collaborated with Evidence Based Associates (EBA), a consulting group with experience in juvenile justice reform and the use of evidence-based programs, to review existing practices that guide reentry planning. In May 2015, based on this review, EBA released its findings and recommendations to improve reentry planning for youth leaving DJJ and their families. This document was submitted to OJJDP in hopes of garnering a share of grant funds available to implement the recommendations.

"It was all about teamwork. We proved the need with data, and relied on best practices to address the need."

– DJJ Reentry Program Manager
Ashaki McNeil on successfully garnering more than \$1 million in federal grants for Virginia



DJJ's partnership with the Department of Motor Vehicles is one of many reentry initiatives now underway as a result of a major grant award from the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. A mobile DMV unit provides testing and learner's permits for residents preparing to return to their communities.

The months of hard work paid off when Gov. Terry McAuliffe's office announced that Virginia was one of only three states to receive matching grants totaling more than \$1 million to implement its statewide reentry plan.

"This grant will further my administration's efforts to transform our juvenile justice system so that young people who make mistakes can reenter society ready to live productive and healthy lives," Gov. McAuliffe said in the announcement.

"It was all about teamwork," McNeil says. "We proved the need with data, and relied on best practices to address the need. We had help from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, longtime DJJ employees and caring partners throughout the Commonwealth. We did a really good job of planning, which made a difference in the end."

Since the grant was awarded, a number of new reentry initiatives have begun. Among them:

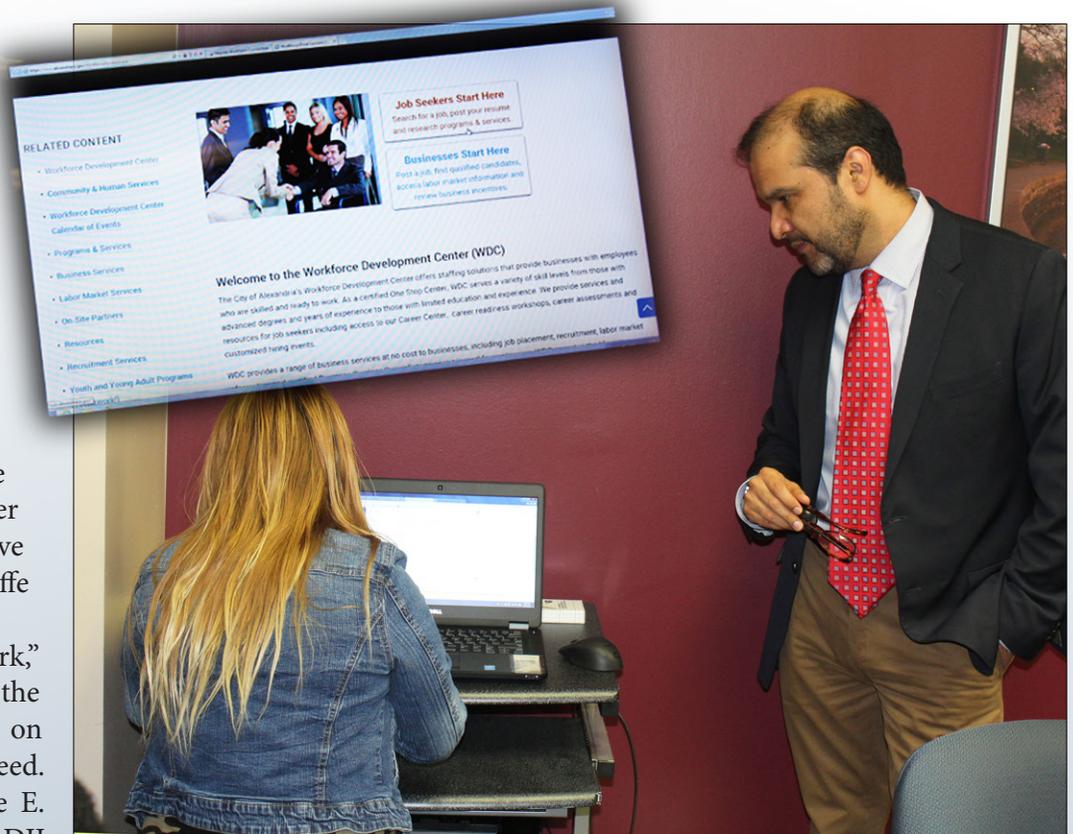
- Partnership with selected Court Service Units, Community Placement Programs and local Workforce Development Centers to create Share Network Access Points (SNAP) to offer

youth career exploration, job search assistance, financial literacy education and employer recruitment activities.

- A mobile DMV Testing Center now allows youth to obtain a valid Virginia learner's permit.
- DJJ's video visitation program is being expanded.
- A new transportation service is being provided in partnership with

two transportation companies to take families to juvenile correctional facilities during visitation hours.

"This grant and all the new programs it is supporting are playing a major role in the ongoing DJJ transformation," McNeil says. "Thanks to all our partners and staff who are making it happen on behalf of our court-involved youth and families."



Probation Officer Jorge Manzo of CSU 18-Alexandria provides guidance to a youth using a laptop and rolling desk recently purchased for the CSU as part of the Share Network Access Points (SNAP) program. The laptop provides youth another way to seek employment and create a job profile without traveling to the Workforce Development Center.



Above: DJJ now partners with the City of Alexandria's Workforce Development Center (WDC) to provide Share Network Access Points (SNAP). From left: DJJ Northern Virginia Reentry Advocate George Peoples; Northern Region Program Manager Dee Kirk; CSU 18-Alexandria Probation Officer Anthony McAllister; Lenwood Roberts, WDC Director; Octavius Fulton, City of Alexandria Department of Community and Human Services; CSU 18 Director Mike Mackey. Right: DJJ has signed agreements with VanGo and James River Transportation to provide bus shuttle service to families wishing to visit juvenile correctional centers.

