



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

July 28, 2014

Collaboration Is Key To Success Of MHSTP Pilot

Determined to graduate on time, “George” enrolled in Richmond’s Performance Learning Center, consistently attending class every day and finishing his requirements for graduation at the end of April. He graduated from John Marshall High School on June 10. Since completing school, George has maintained employment and has expressed a desire to attend school for fashion design. He is a young man on the move with passion and drive to accomplish great things.

College turned out to be a big challenge for “Judy,” who dropped out after enrolling for the spring semester. However, with encouragement and help from DJJ staff through the Mental Health Services Transition Plan (MHSTP), she has decided to change majors and has re-enrolled at VCU for the fall semester.

These two students and eight others like them who have gone on to success probably would not have done so without the MHSTP, a pilot program spearheaded by a partnership between DJJ and the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA).

“Education and employment barriers are the most common obstacles for young adults returning to the community from the juvenile correctional center,” says Re-Entry Program Manager Ashaki McNeil. “This has especially been proven to be true for young people with mental health challenges. With the assistance of Renesha James, one of DJJ’s special education teachers, and Marcia Lamb, a mental health clinician from the RBHA, those barriers are being removed.”



Standing, from left: Marcia Lamb, Mental Health Professional from the Richmond Behavioral Health Authority; Ashaki McNeil, Re-Entry Program Manager. Seated, from left: Camilita Hayes, CSU 13 Parole Supervisor; Renesha Collier-James, Education Coordinator.

McNeil first applied for a grant from the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to partner with the RBHA to place a mental health clinician in CSU 13–Richmond to address the needs of these young people. To address the educational need, DJJ placed Ms. James to serve as an advocate and support person for families and youth

re-enrolling in Richmond Public Schools.

Under the supervision of CSU 13 Parole Supervisor Camilita Hayes, the program has strived to make a difference. Together they have achieved 100 percent re-enrollment for kids returning to the City of Richmond Public Schools.