



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

Aug. 24, 2015

Certification Unit Ensures Quality Quarters For Kids

*Inspection Team Looks For Environment
"We Would Want For Our Own Kids"*

Two years ago, DJJ's Certification Unit Manager Ken Bailey received a Governor's Career Achievement Award. The 47-year veteran was honored for having a "profound impact on the lives of children and youth throughout Virginia....His leadership helps ensure that the conditions of juvenile confinement are safe and secure."

Bailey says he appreciates the accolades, and credits a "great staff" for playing a major role in improving the process for auditing the quality of juvenile group facilities around the Commonwealth over the years. But he adds, "Our philosophy is pretty simple. Before we do an inspection, we all ask ourselves the same question: If one of our own kids had to live in one of these homes, what would we want for them? The answer is, we'd want them to live in a decent environment."

He remembers when this was not always the case. In fact, he says it was not unusual 30 years ago to find juvenile homes and detention centers with 30 or more deficiencies during a single inspection. "It's so much better now," Bailey says. "Improved regulations, combined with the relationships we have developed over time, have resulted in much better living situations for the kids we serve."

The unit audits only facilities that receive Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act (VJCCCA) funds...no privately-run homes. DJJ's two Juvenile Correctional Centers, 19 community youth homes, 24 detention centers, 18 post-dispositional detention programs and 34 Court Service Units all receive yearly audits. Each audit is a thorough, multi-level exercise that begins with laying out an inspection schedule for the entire year. Certification team members are selected, and a pre-audit consultation is conducted at each facility.



Above: John Adams inspects a shower in the SPARC Home in Lynchburg. Below, from left: Certification Analyst Mark Lewis, SPARC House Caseworker Cheryl Edwards, SPARC House Administrative Assistant Hazel Surratt, and Certification Specialist Deborah Hayes go over a report.



When the audit team arrives at the inspection site, they conduct the audit, interpret the standards for the facility's manager, compile their findings, prepare a compliance plan, review corrective actions needed with the facility's management, and then prepare a final audit report.

"This is not an 'I gotcha' process," Bailey stresses. "A few see us as threatening, but most see us as helpful. After a while, they understand that we're really there to help them see some things they may not have even been aware of that need attention. They're happy to comply, and grateful that we told them about it."

A recent visit to the SPARC House for girls in Lynchburg was a typical example of what goes on during the 2-3 day process, says Certification Analyst Mark Lewis. Food Operations Manager John Adams checked refrigerator temperatures and equipment in the kitchen, as well as bathroom fixtures; Assistant Certification Analyst Sean Milner interviewed the home's caretakers; Certification Analysts Shelia Palmer and Clarice Booker and Certification Specialist Deborah Hayes all pored over medical and personnel records in thick binders to ensure compliance with required record-keeping.

"You can't put a price tag on the value of the guidance provided by the Certification Unit staff to our partner agencies to ensure a safe and secure environment for youth housed in their facilities," noted DJJ's Deputy Director Angela Valentine. "It's all about the relationship building that is a focal point of the unit and creating a sense that we are all in this together to improve the care of youth in confinement."



DJJ's Certification Unit team in front of the SPARC House for girls in Lynchburg. From left: Certification Analyst Shelia Palmer, Asst. Certification Analyst Sean Milner, Certification Analyst Clarice Booker, Certification Analyst Mark Lewis, Certification Specialist Deborah Hayes, Food Operations Manager John Adams.

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- Ken Bailey, DJJ's Certification Unit Manager, regarding facility inspections



*Tiny Drakes Branch
Yields Big DJJ Talent*

According to the U.S. Census, the population of the tiny hamlet of Drakes Branch, VA, in 2013 was 513. The community, located about 45 miles southeast of Lynchburg as the crow flies, can take great pride in having produced two of DJJ's longest-tenured and most talented employees.

Certification Unit Manager Ken Bailey, who has served in that capacity for more than 40 years, considers himself lucky to have hired longtime DJJ employee Deborah Hayes as a certification specialist and administrative assistant. He was pleasantly surprised to find out soon thereafter that they share the same hometown roots.

