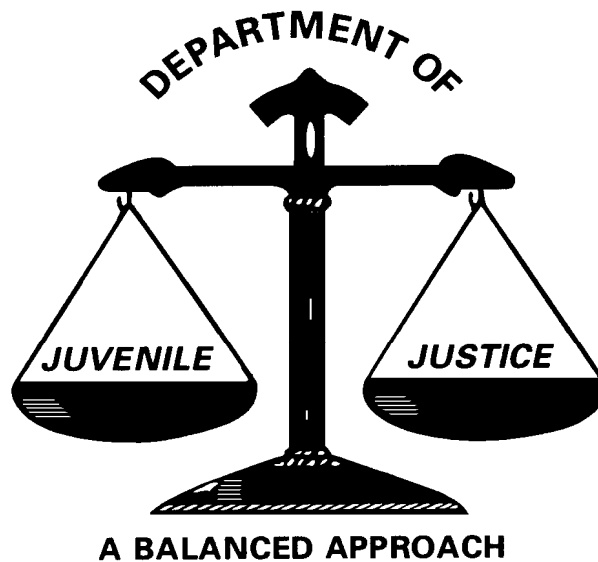


**Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice Re-Entry Initiative  
Four-Year Strategic Plan**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**November 2010**



## **Executive Summary**

### **Overview of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice**

The Mission of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is to protect the public through a balanced approach of accountability and comprehensive services that prevent and reduce delinquency through partnerships with families, schools, communities, law enforcement, and others, while providing opportunities for delinquent youth to become responsible and productive citizens. To accomplish this mission, DJJ embraces an integrated approach to juvenile justice. The Department brings together current research and best practices in order to: better understand and modify delinquent behavior; meet the needs of offenders, victims, and communities; and manage activities and resources in a responsible and proactive manner.

DJJ's approach to treatment of juvenile offenders provides: (1) protection of public safety by control of a juvenile's liberty through secure confinement and/or community supervision; (2) a structured system of incentives and graduated sanctions in both institutional and community settings to ensure accountability for the juvenile's actions; and (3) a variety of services and programs that build skills and competencies (e.g., substance abuse treatment, support for academic and vocational education, anger management classes) to enable the juvenile to become a law-abiding member of the community upon release from DJJ's supervision.

The Division of Operations is responsible for providing a continuum of institutional and community-based services to juvenile offenders. Transition planning and skill development begins at intake at the Reception and Diagnostic Center. At the time of admission, each juvenile undergoes a thorough assessment that identifies treatment needs, educational placement, and supportive services. A DJJ institutional case manager is responsible for the development of the Comprehensive Service Plan, which outlines the services to be provided during commitment. A DJJ parole officer provides case management to include parole placement, anticipated community service needs, and family involvement. The family involvement component occurs during incarceration, reentry, and through the period of community supervision. Collaboration between the parole officer and the institutional case manager is maintained through regular contacts and written progress reports.

While DJJ assumes the primary responsibility for Virginia's juvenile justice system, collaborative partnerships are the cornerstone of the DJJ approach. Local governments operate a network of secure detention facilities and an array of services addressing each aspect of the balanced approach. Within each community, DJJ works with the judiciary, law enforcement, behavioral health providers, schools, social services, and other agencies to ensure sound offender plans. Securing services from private providers assists DJJ in meeting the needs of juvenile offenders, their families, and communities. At the state level, DJJ works with other executive, legislative, and judicial branch agencies in a similar manner.

Through the application of this integrated approach to juvenile justice, DJJ continues to make a difference in the lives of citizens and communities across the Commonwealth. Through responsible resource management, performance accountability, and sound intervention strategies, DJJ strives to improve and meet the changing demands of juvenile justice practice.

## **Development of the DJJ Re-Entry Strategic Plan**

The critical need to break the cycle of crime and incarceration for juvenile and adult offenders is increasingly prominent at all levels of government. Governor Robert F. McDonnell, in one of the early acts of his Administration, issued Executive Order Number 11, establishing the Virginia Prisoner and Juvenile Offender Re-Entry Council. The Council is tasked with developing comprehensive re-entry strategies to reduce recidivism. Success in this endeavor will require collaboration and coordination among units of state and local government, as well as many other community partners.

Improving outcomes for juvenile offenders released from commitment is among the most important responsibilities of DJJ. In Virginia, approximately one-half (46.9% - 53.8%) of those released from a juvenile correctional center in fiscal years 2004 – 2008 were re-arrested for a new crime within 12 months following release. Approximately 40% of those released were convicted of that new offense. At 36 months post-release, reconviction rates exceed 70% (for juveniles released in 2005 and tracked through 2008 and released in 2006 and tracked through 2009)<sup>1</sup>. DJJ's recidivism rates are comparable or better than those found in many other states; however, current rates remain too high. While it is unrealistic to expect that recidivism can be totally eliminated, each juvenile that successfully re-enters the community means one or more less victims of crime, one more young adult working and contributing to the life of the community, one more child whose father or mother is present to care for them as opposed to being incarcerated, and one step closer to a safer community.

Decades of research and lessons learned from re-entry initiatives have established an emerging model of juvenile offender re-entry best practice. Supported for almost 20 years by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the Intensive Juvenile Aftercare Program (IAP), developed by David Altschuler and Troy Armstrong, represents the current “state of the art” in conceptualizing and operationalizing effective juvenile offender re-entry practices. Thus, DJJ has selected this model as the foundation on which to build the Virginia Juvenile Offender Re-Entry Initiative.

DJJ has utilized the aspects of the IAP model as a basic foundation for its enhanced re-entry practices, as well as for improvements in those practices to be addressed through this re-entry initiative. The model is comprehensive, addressing practices directed at the juvenile offender and his or her family, as well as activities of the juvenile correctional centers (JCCs) and parole officers. The model stresses the role of partnerships with service providers in both the institutional and community settings and linkages with social networks (e.g., the faith-based community) that support the juvenile offender's reintegration into the community and reinforce pro-social choices. The model balances public safety through monitoring and other social control mechanisms with building competencies for successful community functioning.

In June of 2010, DJJ convened a workshop to include participants from key agencies from across the state, partners from other state and local agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations and the faith-based community. The workshop included small group discussions between DJJ

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, Data Resource Guide, Fiscal Year 2009.

and partner agencies and focused on specific topics relevant to the juvenile offender re-entry process.

Following the workshop, a DJJ team conducted an analysis of current DJJ re-entry practices compared to the “best practices” found in the IAP model. The team used this gap analysis to guide the development of the recommendations. Additionally, an independent group consisting of DJJ field staff, local partner agencies, and the faith-based community was convened to obtain additional suggestions and input into the re-entry strategic plan. Specific recommended actions are identified and incorporated into a work plan necessary to bring the strategies to life.

The Juvenile Offender Re-Entry Strategic Plan builds on activities that are presently in place or in various stages of development and implementation. It also incorporates new initiatives being introduced into operation such as faith-based mentoring and video visitation for families of committed juveniles. With a focus on public safety, existing strategies can be used to enhance evidence-based programs and to employ best practices in both institutional and community settings. Working with partners, enhancing the skills and competencies of the DJJ workforce, using data to manage resources, and enhancing effectiveness, will serve as the foundation for new objectives and initiatives.

## **DJJ Re-Entry Strategic Plan Summary**

### **Vision**

Successful youth; strong families; safe communities

### **Re-Entry Mission**

To promote public safety and accountability by implementing a seamless plan of services for each offender for a successful transition and reintegration in the community

### **Guiding Principles**

1. Promote public safety through the successful re-entry of juvenile offenders.
2. Re-entry is not a program - it is a way of doing business.
3. Re-entry must be a seamless process from the time of commitment through the release from supervision.
4. Use of validated assessments of risk and criminogenic needs at key stages of the re-entry process as the basis for case planning.
5. Case planning is the cornerstone of re-entry; it must be individualized, collaborative, and continuous.
6. Evidence-based approaches and practices are likely to result in the most effective outcomes.
7. Juvenile offenders must take responsibility for their actions and understand the consequences that those actions had on them and others.
8. Juvenile offenders must be prepared for progressively increased responsibility and freedom in the community through competency development.
9. Engaging youth, family and community support systems is essential to successful re-entry.

10. Monitoring and testing each resident's ability to adjust to the community lowers the risk of negative outcomes.
11. Ongoing evaluation of activities and results as well as ability to modify policies and practices accordingly is critical in order to improve outcomes.
12. Management information systems must support the work, including shared data across all areas of the Department.

## **Goals**

1. Promote public safety and juvenile offender accountability;
2. Ensure juvenile offenders have an individualized plan for re-entry from commitment through release from supervision;
3. Improve re-entry outcomes by enhancing the service delivery system to become more comprehensive, continuous, and evidence-based;
4. Improve re-entry outcomes by providing opportunities for progressively increased responsibility and freedom;
5. Develop and nurture existing partnerships and collaborations to support successful re-entry in the community;
6. Create an organizational culture that supports risk reduction and re-entry work with juvenile offenders;
7. Conduct ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the re-entry strategic plan;
8. Engage juvenile offenders and families in successful re-entry.

## **Service Components**

In addition to continuing the service components already in operation, DJJ will implement the re-entry strategic plan over the next three years. A re-entry specialist position will oversee the process, and staff in the institutions and the community will be trained in order to accomplish the objectives and to create an organizational culture that supports re-entry. Once implementation is completed, the re-entry continuum will operate as described below, beginning at commitment:

### ***Institutional Phase***

#### ***At Commitment***

- Juveniles will arrive at the Reception and Diagnostic Center (RDC) for orientation, evaluation, and classification.
- RDC will conduct academic, medical, psychological, behavioral, and sociological evaluations as well as determine classifications for appropriate treatment needs, security requirements, facility placements, and lengths of stay.
- Juveniles will be assigned a parole officer to provide case management services, facilitate transitional services, determine appropriate placement prior to release, and monitor adjustment to community living. Parole services will build on the programs that the juvenile received during the period of secure confinement in the JCCs. This early involvement necessitates the parole officer developing a relationship with the offender from his or her arrival through parole.

- Juveniles will be assigned a counselor who is responsible for coordination of the evaluation process, individual and crisis counseling, completion of the sociological report, and case management.

#### *Data Entry*

- Case plan information, progress reports, and other relevant data will be incorporated into DJJ's electronic data system (BADGE) to ensure accessibility and appropriate tracking.
- RDC will track juvenile data for the DJJ Research and Evaluation Unit to create a global picture of committed juveniles to include education, mental health, physical, behavior, and social information. Additionally, the facility will be responsible for housing and maintaining all master files for the Department and will serve as the clearinghouse for release of information to other appropriate entities.

#### *Case Planning and Management*

- RDC will compile information for each juvenile. This information includes that which is provided by the community and from comprehensive evaluations conducted at RDC. The profile will include educational status, vocational interests and aptitudes, psychological/psychiatric status, substance abuse, and social/interpersonal functioning.
- An individualized case plan will be developed for each juvenile using a uniform case planning template. The case plan will follow the juvenile from commitment through discharge from parole, with formalized periodic reassessments. This plan will be used by court service unit and institutional staff.
- The Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) will be used to assess risk, needs, and protective factors as well as to develop the case plan. The YASI generates an overall risk score and also identifies needs in areas including family, school, community and peers, alcohol and drugs, mental health, aggression, (pro- and anti-social) attitudes, (social and cognitive) skills, and employment and free time.
- Juveniles' comprehensive case plan will incorporate the needs and strengths of the juveniles' family/guardian situation, placement options, and community resources. Placement options will be continually re-assessed at each case plan progress review.
- Juveniles' current benefits and resources will be reviewed to determine what steps will be needed to transition the juveniles back to active status upon release. The Department will utilize partnerships with community-based providers to ensure that funding and/or insurance coverage has been identified for continued care upon release and that juveniles will receive uninterrupted health, mental health, substance use disorder services, and medications.
- Each comprehensive case plan will incorporate community accountability measures (e.g., community service, restitution, victim-awareness activities).
- For juveniles with mental health treatment needs that require continued treatment when they are released to the community, a Mental Health Services Transition Plan will be developed as part of the comprehensive case plan before release by the juvenile's parole officer in collaboration with treatment providers in the institution and the community as well as family members and other relevant parties.
- A re-entry relapse prevention plan will be developed as part of the comprehensive case plan in order to assist juveniles and their families in identifying patterns and situations that increase risk of relapse/recidivism. This plan will include strategies to cope with and counteract these risks.

- The Department will utilize a re-entry planning team approach to include institutional staff, parole officers, juveniles, family members, and community service providers, as appropriate. This team will begin at the time of the initial case plan development and continue through the time of release from parole with membership changing as needed based on the juvenile's status.

### *Engaging Families*

- Juveniles and their families will be included in information sharing and communication throughout the commitment, treatment, and re-entry processes.
- Juveniles, family members, parole officers and other community partners will participate in the staffing process at RDC to strengthen the multidisciplinary review of assessment findings. They will also participate in the multidisciplinary case planning process (Treatment Team).
- The re-entry relapse prevention plan will be reviewed with the juvenile, family, DJJ staff, and community partners prior to release as well as on a regular basis thereafter to determine effectiveness and need for revision.
- The Department will educate parents/guardians on the content of institutional interventions and how they can help reinforce new skills upon re-entry.
- Video visitation will be available through the involvement of faith-based community partners.
- The Department will solicit family input regarding the quality of institutional and community based programs and services.
- Juveniles will be assessed concerning their families' willingness and ability to support their return home. Strengths or barriers for returning home will be evaluated. Services and resources that will provide support for successful return home or alternate living arrangements will be identified.

### *JCC Programs & Services*

- Juveniles will have access to a continuum of evidence-based programs during commitment and upon release to community supervision based on each juvenile's risks and needs. These programs and services include areas such as substance abuse, mental health, sex offending, aggression management, independent living skills, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving skills.
- Behavior Services Unit (BSU) will provide mental health services in the JCCs, including individual, group, and family psychotherapy; crisis intervention services; psychological assessment; risk assessment; case consultation; and staff training in treatment issues. Specialized educational and treatment services will be available for special populations.
- Juveniles will be provided educational services in the JCCs, including academic instruction, special education services, GED programs, career and technical instructional services, and instructional technologies by the Department of Correctional Education (DCE). Post-secondary educational opportunities will also be available in the JCCs and upon release to the community.
- Beginning at RDC, juveniles will participate in the "REACH" program, emphasizing **R**esponsibility, **E**mpowerment, **A**chievement, **C**hange, and **H**ope. REACH establishes a structured daily schedule and encourages responsibility. The program is designed to focus on identifying and reinforcing desired behaviors; tracking and providing feedback for

inappropriate behaviors; and having a system of phases through which the juvenile can advance.

- Juveniles will participate in the Phoenix Curriculum<sup>2</sup> in both the JCCs and in the community in order to enhance decision-making skills.
- Youth Industries and the Work/Education Release Program will provide eligible juveniles the opportunity to engage in employment provided both on the JCC grounds and in local communities.
- Juveniles will be provided community service opportunities within the JCCs.
- The daily institutional schedule will include age appropriate independent living skills programming and structured step-down placements.
- DJJ will utilize strong, positive, and effective working relationships with national, state, and local organizations to provide services and resources to youth re-entering the community.
- Mentoring programs for pre-release and post-release will be available through faith based community partners and others.

### ***Transitional Phase***

#### *Transitional Programs*

- Eligible juveniles will have the opportunity to participate in furloughs prior to release from the JCCs.
- Community-based providers will begin services and DJJ mental health and substance use disorders treatment staff will communicate with the identified community based provider prior to release.
- Step-down alternatives for eligible juveniles will include modified housing pods within existing JCCs, transitional cottages, and detention re-entry.
- Halfway house placements will provide transitional skills to eligible juveniles released from the JCCs.
- Privately operated group homes will provide residential re-entry services and independent living skills for eligible juveniles who will be returning to their home community to reside with their parent or guardian.
- The Department will utilize step-down community-based housing options operated by community partners (e.g., Department of Social Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services).

### ***Community Follow-up Phase***

#### *Parole Supervision*

- Parole supervision levels will be based on the juvenile's assessed risk of reoffending and adjustment to rules and expectations.
- The period of parole will vary according to the juvenile's needs, level of risk, offense history, and adjustment.

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<sup>2</sup> The Phoenix Program is an evidenced based curriculum that helps residents develop a variety of behavioral, cognitive, and affective skills necessary to function effectively in the institutions and community settings.



- Juveniles' behaviors will be monitored using graduated sanctions and incentives to encourage compliance with rules of supervision.
- Juveniles will receive an array of community-based transitional services to include family and individual counseling; referral to other community services; vocational services; and specialized educational services. These services will be provided statewide by a network of approved vendors from which the local court service units purchase programs and services for paroled juveniles and their families. The intent of community based transitional services is to provide short term non-residential services to support and assist the juvenile's adjustment to the community following commitment
- Juveniles on community parole supervision will be tested for drugs and alcohol using standardized protocols.
- Day /evening reporting centers and increased use of electronic monitoring will be utilized.
- DJJ will work with local law enforcement, in accordance with confidentiality requirements specified in the *Code of Virginia*, to monitor the activities of high-risk parolees.
- Decisions to release juveniles from parole supervision will be based on compliance with parole rules and completion of goals in the case plan.
- Parole staff will incorporate the interventions provided to the juveniles in the JCCs by using structured methods to reinforce the learned skills.

### **Concluding Comments**

Public Safety, successful youth, and reduced recidivism are the outcomes expected by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice through implementation of this Re-Entry Strategic Plan. In order to define and facilitate this process, DJJ has established a series of outcome measures (objectives), broad strategies; and specific activities to achieve these objectives. The re-entry strategic plan will serve as a statement of agency policy and a "road map" for staff at all levels of the organization. The plan will assist all DJJ employees in defining their roles in contributing to the desired results and will provide the agency with benchmarks for monitoring progress, making adjustments, and keeping the mission in clear focus.

With the expected input from the Governor's Prisoner and Juvenile Offender Re-Entry Council and other stakeholder groups, this document is seen as a dynamic playbook that will evolve and improve. The re-entry strategic plan will be reviewed and updated twice a year to reflect progress, newly identified challenges, and ongoing interaction with DJJ's partners.