

Robert Vilchez, Chair  
Scott Kizner, Vice Chair  
Synethia White, Secretary  
Lisa Cason  
Eric English  
William Johnson  
David Mick  
Laura F. O'Quinn



Post Office Box 1110  
Richmond, VA 23218-1110  
804.588.3903

## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA *Board of Juvenile Justice*

### DRAFT BOARD MINUTES

March 31, 2025

Virginia Public Safety Training Center

**Board Members Present:** Lisa Cason (remote participant), Eric English, William (Will) Johnson, Scott Kizner, David Mick, Robert (Tito) Vilchez, and Synethia White

**Board Members Absent:** Laura O'Quinn

**Department of Juvenile Justice (Department) Staff:** Frank Battle, Ken Davis, Michael Favale, Wendy Hoffman, Hamlet Hood, Jerri Jackson, Nikia Jones, Melodie Martin, Andrea McMahon, Ashaki McNeil, Linda McWilliams, Leah Nelson, Brian Russell, Cassandra Sheehan (Attorney General's Office), James Towey, and Deana Williams

**Guests (Signed the Attendance List):** Amber Banks, Jameka Jackson, Tyler Layne, Pamela Little-Hill, Keyris Manzanares, Enza Mercy, and Valerie Slater

#### CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chairperson Tito Vilchez called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and asked for introductions.

#### CONSIDERATION OF REMOTE PARTICIPATION

On motion duly made by Synethia White and seconded by Eric English, the Board of Juvenile Justice approved (1) the Chair's decision to approve the request of Board Member Lisa Cason to participate from a remote location on the grounds that her principal residence location is more than 60 miles from the meeting location, and (2) affirmed that her voice could be heard by all persons at the primary meeting location. All Board members present declared "aye," and the motion carried.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Valerie Slater from RISE for Youth provided public comment; her printed comments are attached to the meeting minutes.

#### CONSIDERATION OF BOARD MINUTES

The minutes of November 1, 2024, and December 6, 2024, Board meetings were offered for approval. On motion duly made by Will Johnson and seconded by Eric English, the Board approved the minutes as presented. All Board members present declared "aye," and the motion carried.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Consideration of the City of Chesapeake Needs Assessment**

Ken Davis, Regulatory Coordinator, Department

Mr. Davis explained the process for the City of Chesapeake's request to move forward with their needs assessment on renovations to their Juvenile Detention Center (JDC). Mr. Davis introduced Leah Nelson from the Department's Quality Assurance Unit and Pamela Little-Hill and Jameka Jackson from the City of Chesapeake, who were present at the meeting to answer any questions.

Chapter 30, Regulation Governing State Reimbursement of Local Juvenile Residential Facility Costs, was created to fulfill the requirements of §§ 16.1-309.5 and 16.1-309.9 of the Code of Virginia pertaining to the construction, enlargement, purchase, or renovation of juvenile detention centers and other facilities, and state reimbursement for those projects. The regulation requires that any such project be subject to chapter 30 and all other applicable statutes, regulations, and guidance documents. Those guidance documents include, among others, The Step-By-Step Procedure for Approval and Reimbursement for Local Facility Construction, Enlargement, and Renovation.

While Chapter 30 does contain several enforceable provisions on the subject, it is the Step-By-Step Procedure that outlines the specific steps to be taken for localities and facilities to file for state reimbursement for these types of projects. The certification regulation, 6VAC35-20, also has a requirement that new construction, expansion, and renovations of all juvenile residential facilities, whether or not the facility or its sponsor is seeking reimbursement for construction or operation, shall conform to the governing provisions of the regulation governing state reimbursement. The Step-by-Step Procedure is incorporated by reference into Chapter 30 and contains the requirement the Department follows.

The Step-By-Step document sets out the procedure that localities and facilities must follow for construction and renovation projects including the needs assessment, planning study, preliminary design, and construction documents. There are also procedures for the confirmation of funding and the reimbursement itself. In addition, the Step-By-Step document contains all the required construction specifications, also known as the "guide specs". These detail specifications such as the kinds of masonry or fire suppression system to be used.

The first step of the process is the needs assessment. According to the Step-by-Step document, the needs assessment is an evaluation of trends and factors at the local or regional level which may affect current and future client needs and the assessment of local facilities and nonresidential programs available to meet such needs. The needs assessment starts with a letter to the Department briefly describing the unmet need, stating the governing body's intent to complete a needs assessment, identifying the locality's project manager, and requesting the Department's assistance with the project. The Department's detention specialist will then assist the locality in preparing the needs assessment present to the Board. Leah Nelson is filling the role as the Department's detention specialist because that role is currently vacant.

Board approval, and approval by the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, will authorize the locality to proceed to the planning study which is the overall description of the proposed project consisting of new construction, renovation of existing facilities, or both. The needs

assessment step is not the end; the Board will hear from the Chesapeake team several more times as they go through the process.

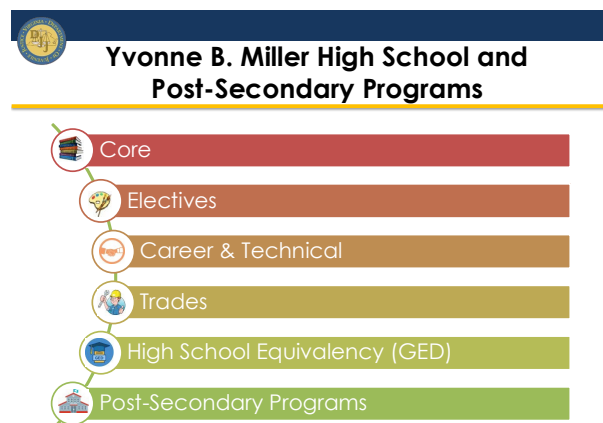
Leah Nelson concluded the presentation by noting that the first step of the Step-by-Step procedure was the submission of the letter by the City of Chesapeake which prompted the presentation to the Board at this meeting. The completed needs assessment for the Chesapeake JDC is on pages 42 – 136 of the Board packet. The City of Chesapeake would like the Board's consideration and approval of the needs assessment, in order to move forward with the next step in the process.

Chairperson Vilchez noted that the next step would be the planning study, and asked whether the Department would provide an update of the process at the next meeting. Ms. Nelson responded that the locality would develop their planning study and submit drafts to the Department's Quality Assurance and Capital Outlay Offices, and a synopsis of the planning study would then be provided to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security for review. The Department will have meetings with Chesapeake and determine whether to indicate acceptance. It will then come back to the Board.

On motion duly made by Tito Vilchez and seconded by David Mick, and pursuant to 6VAC35-30 (Regulation Governing State Reimbursement of Local Juvenile Residential Facility Costs), and in adherence to the Department of Juvenile Justice Step-By-Step Procedures for Approval and Reimbursement for Local Facility Construction, Enlargement, and Renovation, the Board of Juvenile Justice approved the Chesapeake Juvenile Services Needs Assessment to renovate the Chesapeake Juvenile Detention Center and authorized Chesapeake Juvenile Services to proceed to a Planning Study. All Board members present declared "aye," and the motion carried.

### Education Program Update

Deana Williams, School Superintendent, Department



Yvonne B. Miller High School offers many of the same courses as a public high school and is monitored by the Virginia Department of Education (DOE). Our program does not offer any courses not approved by DOE.

Core subjects include:

- English classes, grades nine through 12.
- Math is offered from low to high level.

- The sciences offered are biology, environmental, and some chemistry classes.
- All the history classes are offered to include government and Virginia and US history.
- Electives include music, art, health, driver's education, or career technical classes. Currently offered are AD Design 1 and 2, as well as business and information technology classes.
- GED programs for students who wish to have that option.
- Trades classes have opened for both high school and postsecondary students, and there are enrichment classes such as music production. Barbering is a popular trades study where students can take the state board and earn a license. There is also a forklift simulator class where youth can be transported to Reynolds Community College and earn a forklift certification.
- College courses are offered, mainly in the areas of business and entrepreneurship. There are a couple of students enrolled in the online programs, and it is going well.



## Instructional Model

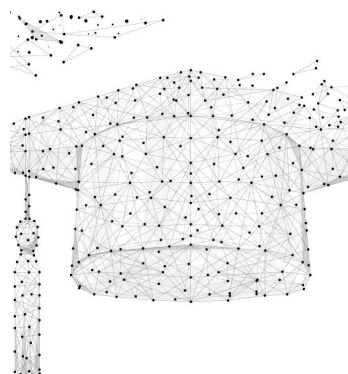
**Blended learning** combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online activities and hands-on experiences, creating a flexible and personalized learning environment. This model also enhances accessibility, particularly for students who face scheduling or location challenges.

Through blended learning, teachers can focus on providing individualized support, fostering active learning, and improving retention. Combining these diverse formats not only enhances academic outcomes but also builds essential digital literacy skills, preparing students for future careers.

The Department's Division of Education (Education Program) currently uses the blended learning model.



## Digital Learning Platforms



**Virtual Virginia through Canvas:**  
Core Subjects & Electives

**ICEV:**  
Career & Technical Education

**NCCER (with VITA):**  
Trades


**GED Academy:**  
GED®/High School Equivalency  
(HSE)

These platforms support the blended learning model. An online platform for every course is offered at Bon Air.

Virtual Virginia is used for all core subjects and electives. DOE has used Virtual Virginia for several years and has ensured all online curriculum is aligned with DOE standards.

iCEV is an online platform that offers every career and technical course designed.

NCCER is associated with VITA and has taken some time to become operational; meanwhile, there are textbooks and printed materials for those classes.

 <b>Student Assessments and Educational Apps</b>	
Assessments	Educational Apps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ISAEP/GED®</li><li>• SOL Testing (Fall and Spring)</li><li>• ACT WorkKeys- substitute test for EOC Reading and Writing SOLs</li><li>• WISE Financial Literacy testing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Newsela (ELA, SS, SCI)</li><li>• Gizmos (SCI, Math)</li><li>• Everfi (financial literacy)</li><li>• Lexia (ELA)</li><li>• NoRedInk (Writing across curriculum)</li></ul>

The Education Program does have different educational apps used as tools in the classrooms.

- **Newsela** for English language arts, social studies, and science.
- **Gizmos** are virtual labs for science and math.
- **Everfi** are interactive lessons which prepare students for the WISE exam. This is used as a career and technical certification for graduation.
- **Lexia** is research proven computerized reading program that accelerates skills for students.
- **NoRedInk** improves students' writing and grammar skills.

Superintendent Williams provided the Board with copies of the Program of Studies which details the courses offered at Yvonne B. Miller High School.

Board member Kizner asked how long the school day is. Superintendent Williams responded 6.75 hours of instruction, including lunch. There may be some postsecondary education students that take a few courses, but normally most high school students are in school for a full day.

Board member White asked if this was for all facilities. Superintendent Williams replied the schedule is only for Bon Air.

Board member Mick asked about hiring teachers. Superintendent Williams noted that the hiring of teachers is the school's biggest challenge. The most difficult teacher hiring, currently, is for science because of the series of courses it takes to be endorsed.

Board member Johnson asked about the postsecondary course offerings. Superintendent Williams answered that the Education Program does have college courses, some enrichment courses such as music production and art, along with trade certifications for forklift, HVAC, carpentry, and plumbing. The Division of Education is in the process of hiring an electrical teacher. Board member Johnson followed up and asked whether the postsecondary courses were primarily career and technical. Superintendent Williams said yes, mostly career and technical and college.

Board member White asked what the options for online classes or courses are. Superintendent Williams replied that for the past several years, the Education Program has offered small business and entrepreneurship courses through Reynolds Community College, which consist of six courses before earning a career study certificate. The Division of Education is working to expand that degree. There are currently two students who have taken all courses offered at Bon Air and are now in the process of taking courses for an associate's degree.

Board member Johnson asked if those credit courses are college or high school credit towards graduation. Superintendent Williams said that those are specifically for the postsecondary students. The Education Program does not have dual enrollment.

Board member Kizner asked for a sense of the profile of the student that enters Bon Air. Superintendent Williams replied that, on average, students come to Bon Air already a few years behind. It might be that the school receives a student who is in eighth grade but is 16 years old. It is estimated that around 90% of our students read below their grade level. The Division of Education employs two reading specialist positions dedicated to the literacy program.

Board member Kizner asked, if a student is about to leave Bon Air, what is the transition like with the local school system? Superintendent Williams said the Division of Education has a reenrollment coordinator who works with the school team in the community to review all the student records and share information. Board member Kizner asked about the best estimate of percentage of students who graduate with a diploma. Superintendent Williams referred to the last slide in the packet, noting that Penn Foster is no longer used.

Board member Mick said that the reenrollment coordinator is the person who transitions the youth back to the local school, and the transition specialist helps the youth with employment. What is the difference between those two positions? Superintendent Williams responded that the transition specialist does exactly that; they do a series of tests and review the student file to help the youth, who is between high school and college, find employment. Board Member Mick asked how many students are in the Pathful Explore (Virginia Job Shadowing) program. Superintendent Williams said that is one of the kids' favorite programs and takes the student virtually to a job site. Board member Mick offered a "good job" to Superintendent Williams on doubling the graduation numbers for year's past.



## Universal Screening Assessments

STAR Reading & Math	Home Language Survey	Gifted Academic Screener (Language and Math)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administered in October &amp; March or at the time of enrollment/exit.</li><li>• Purpose is to help determine students' proficiency levels, identify gaps in knowledge, and guide interventions.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administered at the beginning of the school year or at the time of enrollment.</li><li>• Purpose is to determine if a student speaks a language other than English at home. If the answer is "yes," it signals that the student may need further assessment to determine their English language proficiency.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completed at the beginning of each school year or semester, depending upon the school schedule.</li><li>• Used to target potential gifted students.</li><li>• Used in conjunction with other assessments and information prior to making a referral.</li></ul>

The Education Program does a series of screening assessments that help identify youth very early on to see if they need more evaluation or court services.

Every couple of years the program does have one or two gifted students that come through.



## Diagnostic Tests for the Literacy Program

Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI)
tests words in isolation and reading passages for comprehension
Core Phonics Survey
tests phonics skills in decoding for real words and pseudo words
Words Their Way
tests knowledge of phonics in encoding (spelling)

Diagnostic tests help identify reading gaps before instruction begins. For the literacy program, once the reading assessment screeners flag students who are low level, the student is pulled into the diagnostic assessment for literacy to make sure they qualify for the reading program but also to determine where to start them in the reading program.



## Diagnostic Tests for EL Students

### WIDA Screener

- Administered after home language survey and students are identified as speaking a language other than English.
- Purpose is to assess the English proficiency of students whose first language is not English and to determine eligibility for language support services.

With the screeners and the diagnostic assessment, the Education Program is trying to take a tiered approach to identify students who need targeted interventions and supports.



## Growth Assessments

<b>ACCESS Online for EL Students</b>	<b>Administered in February</b> Annual test to monitor proficiency in English and decide whether a student still needs support
<b>VDOE Growth Assessments for Reading &amp; Math</b>	<b>Grades 6 - 8</b> Administered in the fall and winter To track how much a student has improved over time, helping educators identify areas where students need more support
<b>Star Reading &amp; Math</b>	<b>Grades 6-12</b> Administered in the fall and spring, or at the time of enrollment To track how much a student has improved over time, helping educators identify areas where students need more support

Growth Assessments are mandatory by DOE.





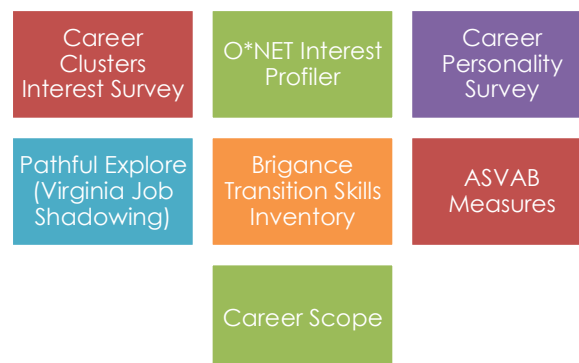
## Student Assessments and Educational Apps

Assessments	Educational Apps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ISAEP/GED®</li><li>• SOL Testing (Fall and Spring)</li><li>• ACT WorkKeys- substitute test for EOC Reading and Writing SOLs</li><li>• WISE Financial Literacy testing</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Newsela (ELA, SS, SCI)</li><li>• Gizmos (SCI, Math)</li><li>• Everfi (financial literacy)</li><li>• Lexia (ELA)</li><li>• NoRedInk (Writing across curriculum)</li></ul>

Superintendent Williams continued her presentation by describing the assessments.



## Career Assessments Academic & Career Plan



This slide shows a series of career assessments. The Division of Education employs two transition specialists, who determine what test to provide the student based on their needs and what they want to do for a career.

Brigance is mainly for students with disabilities.

Career Scope is an interest aptitude test that is primarily for postsecondary students but has been extended to all students.

Board member Kizner asked, of the 25 students who received the standard diploma in the 2023-2024 school year, what percentage did that represent of all students who were eligible for a diploma? Superintendent Williams did not have those numbers, but noted that the Education Program does have students who transition out before graduation.

Board member Kizner asked about the barrier preventing dual enrollment. Superintendent Williams replied that there are no major barriers; it is no different than public schools across the nation. The Department is competing with other local school divisions to hire teachers quickly that have a master's or doctorate degree. The Department must be competitive with other divisions. Board member Kizner said he imagined teacher retention and hiring are a challenge statewide and must be a greater challenge for the Department. Superintendent Williams agreed, especially when local school divisions offer a higher salary bonus such as the City of Richmond who offer \$10,000. The Department did offer bonuses pre-pandemic.

Board member English asked about the language support. Superintendent Williams responded that currently there are six English learner (EL) students; usually the school has between four and six students, and the Division of Education does hire EL teachers. The schedule for EL teachers is designed for them to pull students from classes and offer them more individualized services and support. Although this is not mandated for our GED students, this support is still offered if they need it.

Referring to page 149 of the Board packet, Board member Mick asked whether in 2024 a total student count of 167 was not just seniors. Superintendent Williams said that was correct, it was a combined number at multiple grade levels. Board member Mick stated that in 2024, 42 students received their diplomas and 16 received their GED certificate. What happens now to the 42 youth that graduated? Superintendent Williams said as soon as a student earns a high school diploma or GED, the transition specialist will work with them. They will administer the Career Scope, review their SOL score, and review their academic career plan, which is a required plan through DOE. Board member Mick wanted to make sure that once the youth received their diploma or GED, they were not released. Superintendent Williams answered that those youth are kept engaged. Some students may not know what they want to do but are offered college courses and trades until they decide. Some youth may be exposed to careers they did not think were possible.

Board member Kizner asked if there was a 19- or 20-year-old student with a GED or diploma, do they still have six hours of school a day? Superintendent Williams responded they have a choice. The Education Program would encourage those youth to get involved in something even though they are undecided. They will plug those youth in right away to a postsecondary option. If they do not want to go to college or have not decided on a trade, the Education Program tries to expose them to other options, including enrichment courses to make sure these youth are not sitting on a unit. It is not mandatory for them; they can decide whether it is a full day.



## Support Programs and Services

### Support Programs

- Special Education
- Section 504
- English Language (EL)
- Reading Specialist
- Gifted Programs

### Support Services

- School Counselors
- School Psychologist
- Reenrollment Coordinator
- Transition Specialists
- Compliance Specialists
- Assessment Specialist
- Instructional Technology Resource Specialist
- Library Media Specialist

Superintendent Williams explained that Compliance Specialists used to be part of the Special Education team but have had other programs added to their responsibilities, such as Section 504.

There is an Assessment Specialist that evaluates the student's performance through assessments.

An Instructional Technology Resource Specialist is designated to help teachers implement technology and apps and digital platforms in the classroom.



## Yvonne B. Miller High School and Post-Secondary Programs

Student Count HS

115

Student Count PSP

65

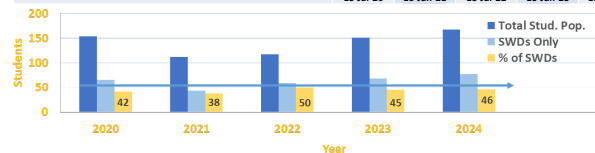
Data extracted from PowerSchool February 26, 2025

Superintendent Williams provided data on overall high school and postsecondary numbers.



### Students with Disabilities Compared to the Total Student Population

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total student count = disabled and non-disabled	154	112	117	151	167
Total students with disabilities	65	43	59	68	77
Percentage of students with disabilities (State average is around 14%)	42%	38%	50%	45%	46%
	(34% SPED 8% 504)	(33% SPED 5% 504)	(35% SPED 15% 504)	(40% SPED 5% 504)	(33% SPED 13% 504)
	15-Jul-20	15-Jun-21	15-Jul-22	15-Jun-23	15-Jun-24



Despite the student population, the percentage of SWDs has remained somewhat consistent each year



This is longitudinal data. It shows that it has always been the case that 30-40% of students have disabilities, and this year it is 46%. This is notably higher than the state average which is around 14%. This important piece of data does suggest that specialized programs and resources are needed. It also helps guide the best instructional model for our students and which digital learning platforms are good for students with disabilities.



### Primary Disability Categories Only

Based on total number of disabled students

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Emotional Disability (ED)	34%	37%	26%	31%	47%
Other Health Impairment (OHI)	20%	26%	32%	34%	29%
Specific Learning Disability (SLD)	17%	16%	21%	18%	9%
Intellectual Disability (ID)	5%	7%	3%	3%	0%
Hearing Impaired	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%
Autism (AUT)	4%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Section 504 Disability	20%	12%	15%	10%	13%
Speech Language Only	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
* Speech Language as a Related Service	0%	0%	0%	9%	4%

\*Speech language as a Related Service is not a primary disabilities.

(data reported on June 15 ea. yr.)



From 2020 to 2024, emotional disability was the highest category at 47%, which is a significant number. Out of the total student population, 46% of students have a disability, but out of the SPED population, 47% have an emotional disability, which is almost half of the students. Other Health Impairments (OHI) are the second highest at 29%. Historically, Intellectual Disability and Autism have been at lower percentages, but the school does currently have a couple of youth, and programs are designed specifically for them.

Board member Kizner asked if the parent participation was good with IEP meetings. Superintendent Williams responded that parent participation has been good, especially since there are more virtual options since the pandemic. More parents can participate virtually than in person. There are times when a parent is not able to provide signatures on IEP paperwork, but the Division of Education sets up tables during visitation to get the needed signatures. Board member Kizner asked if the Department employs a full-time school psychologist. Superintendent Williams replied yes, and she is amazing. This is such a hard position to fill; and Superintendent Williams noted that she had served in that position in schools in Richmond and Henrico.



## YBMHS Three Year Graduation Rate

YVONNE B. MILLER HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION			
	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Advanced Studies Diploma	1	0	0
Standard Diploma	7	23	25
Applied Studies Diploma	2	1	1
Penn Foster High School Diploma	N/A	N/A	N/A
GED® Certificate	12	9	16
Total number of graduates	22	33	42



Data extracted: 7/8/24

Superintendent Williams concluded her presentation by noting that the Department has made great improvements, the strategies in place are working, and students are graduating.

Board member White asked how school is provided when movement is restricted in the facility. Superintendent Williams replied that education is converted over to the units, which is why the online learning platform is so important. Laptop carts are provided for every student in the unit so they can have access to a laptop to do their work online, and teachers are sent to support them in their unit, if needed. If there are students who are removed from the classroom due to behavioral issues, teachers are assigned to visit them and provide education. Those teachers assigned to the unit work directly with content teachers and exchange updates and information on those students. Also, nonstructural days called intersession, like spring break, are used to recover special education services. For example, if students miss a certain amount of school time those students can be pulled into school in order to provide interventions. Board member White asked if that type of information is documented to be shared with families. Superintendent Williams said it is documented in the form of plans that are shared with Bon Air staff.

Board member Kizner recognized that school is all year long and applauded the teachers who have chosen to teach at Bon Air and not at Chesterfield, Henrico, or Richmond who might have potentially better salaries and not work as many days. Superintendent Williams replied that she worked closely with the agency's Human Resources Office to compete with those school divisions. Teachers in the local schools are able to work nine months out of the year, can have access to their cell phones, and

are not restricted by working in a facility. Bon Air is a challenging environment, and working with committed youth provides special challenges for teachers.

#### **DIRECTOR'S CERTIFICATION ACTIONS**

Mr. Bailey was unable to attend the meeting and there are no certification actions.

#### **DIRECTOR AND BOARD COMMENTS**

Director Floriano was unable to attend today's Board meeting, but James Towey, the Department's Regulatory and Legislative Affairs Manager was able to take questions or comments back to agency leadership for a response.

Board member White said the Board has received a lot of information at this meeting, specifically from public comment, and much of it on recurring themes. The Board is notified of things in between meetings and electronically of the happenings at the facility due to the diligence of the staff and the requests Board members have made in previous meetings about being kept aware of issues at Bon Air. But concerns keep coming up. Board member White said she did not speak for the Board as a whole, but in her opinion it seems like the Board needs something more in-depth because the Board keeps hearing about these concerns. Board member White understood the comments from people who have come forward, which have been shared on several occasions. Board member White is not siding with anyone but absolutely understands the concerns. Board member White would like to know what additional things are being addressed in the facility that the Board might not be aware of. Board member White was pleased to learn that if young people are not able to move about the facility, they still receive educational services and that various processes are in place for that scenario. There are quite a few other things listed in the education presentation that Board member White would like to be updated on.

Board member Kizner supported Ms. White's comments. Board member Kizner believed the minutes reflect his desire to have an independent outside group look at many of the comments the Board has been hearing for the past several months. Board member Kizner said there seem to be some reservations on that idea.

Board member Johnson echoed Ms. White and Mr. Kizner's comments. He understood this Board is a policy board, not a supervisory board, and there are only certain things this Board is empowered to do. But usually, the only time the Board really hears about things operationally is during the certification reports. It seems to be, in Board member Johnson's said he feels those presentations are formulaic, so any additional information speaking to Ms. White/Mr. Kizner's comments would be appreciated.

Chairperson Vilchez also echoed the Board's comments. As a Board member and a resident of the state, Chairperson Vilchez is also concerned with what is going on at the Bon Air facility. Chairperson Vilchez appreciated Ms. Slater's public comment and said that it is good the Board is informed. There have been improvements with DJJ's communication to the board about Bon Air, but now, Chairperson Vilchez is asking, as a Board member, what can be done to prevent certain types of behavior at Bon Air? The Board is willing to listen at the next meeting to information about actions to address and prevent further activity of the kind that was shared by Ms. Slater.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairperson Vilchez adjourned the meeting at 10:32 a.m.

**RISE for Youth Public Comment - DJJ Board Meeting 3/31/25**

*Valerie Slater, Esq., Executive Director of RISE for Youth, Criminal Defense Attorney*

Good morning Board members, staff, and attendees. My name is Valerie Slater. I am a criminal defense attorney and the executive director of RISE for Youth, an organization committed to ensuring every space that impacts a young person's life encourages growth and success.

I am giving public comment today once again in response to the many disturbing reports of ill-treatment and harsh conditions endured by youth and staff at Bon Air JCC. To date I continue hearing so many of the same issues from several different sources to include:

- Youth not having regular access to the outside for fresh air and sunlight,
- Residents remaining in their rooms with not even 1 hour out of their rooms to take showers, make phone calls, and participate in large muscle activity for more than 5 days at a time,
- Residents being placed in solitary confinement for several days,
- Youth being deprived of showers for several consecutive days,
- Residents in need of medical treatment being ignored by medical staff,
- Retaliation against staff and residents that speak out,
- Staff working double shifts, and longer, without breaks or notice that their shifts will run consecutively,
- This is not a comprehensive list.

I do not also need to rehearse for you all the incidents that have made the news as of late, and I hear of more that do not make the news. What I am here to ask of each of you, is please, do not dismiss the concerns raised yet again here today as an attempt to advance an ulterior motive or to advance an agenda.

But if you choose not to listen to me, please here and act on behalf of the parents who were brave enough to write and share their deep concerns enclosed in the folder of information I provided to each of you. Please hear the voice of the resident who bravely shared pages from his journal, which are also provided in the folder of information. You will find that all of the pages have been redacted to protect the youth and families brave enough to speak out.

As Board Members, you have the powers and duties promulgated in VA Code § 66-10 which include:

- Establishing and monitoring policies for the DJJ's programs and facilities
- Monitoring the activities of the Department and its effectiveness in implementing the policies developed by the Board.
- Promulgating regulations necessary to accomplish the provisions of this title and other laws of the Commonwealth.
- Ensure the development of programs to educate citizens and elicit public support for the activities of the Department.
- And others.

I once again ask of you board members:

- Support outside investigation into ALL allegations,
- Establish Monthly monitoring of the Bon Air facility with teams that include Board members, advocates, previously incarcerated youth, family members, and legislators who are appointed to Boards and Committees with oversight authority over youth justice issues,
- Ensure monitoring includes reviewing ALL serious incident reports, facility staffing levels, actual school attendance, and the implementation of all rehabilitative programming,
- Move forward with building a smaller more rehabilitative facility on the campus of Bon Air



- Safely reduce the facility population by:
  - Reducing the LOS for indeterminately sentenced youth via
  - An increased use of community-based treatment options
  - Even increasing the use of electronic monitoring which can further help reduce the facility's population

I implore you, please consider implementing the suggested changes, and/or engage with us in meaningful dialogue to develop strategies and solutions that will help find a positive way forward leading to the success of all of Virginia's youth. We must work together to ensure DJJ Is providing a safe environment for its employees and a safe rehabilitative space for youth committed to its care.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I also want to add in that my son is denied medical. [REDACTED]

He hasn't started any treatments and barely gets counseling services. Supposed to have weekly counseling.


Showers daily is a big concern along with schooling. Also 24hr lockdown for days at a time.

[REDACTED]

I hope this request reaches you well. I am writing to express my concerns about the way the children at Bon Air are being treated. My son is a resident at Bon Air. He was transferred there on 8/7/2024. There have been many occasions where my son was locked away in a cell for 24 hours at a time for several days with the most recent being from 2/1/25-2/6/2025. The facility is required to allow these children to be out of their rooms at least 1 hour a day, which is not happening. My son is not getting to attend school regularly either. Currently, visitation with loved ones has been canceled with the last visitation being 1/5/2025. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time this facility has canceled visitation for more than a month. They have not accommodated home video calls with the family during these times. It has been brought to my attention the visitations have been canceled due to lack of staffing at Bon Air. This is another reason why these children are locked away for so long in their cells. Their federal rights are being violated. I have also been given information, not from the facility itself, that there is a rise in violence at this facility and attacks on staff members. For example, a supervisor was jumped, and another staff member was stabbed. I have also gone to visitation where children had broken fingers and black eyes, and parents were never notified. These children are supposed to be being rehabilitated so that they can reenter society. They have been court-ordered by judges to receive treatment services and counseling that are not being fulfilled. We need to take immediate action. I fear for the safety and well-being of my child and for others who are experiencing the same issues. I also fear for his mental state while being incarcerated at Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email with concerns surrounding Bon Air.





A few months ago, my son [REDACTED] sustained a severe head injury caused by a staff member. I was never notified, and he did not receive the necessary medical attention despite the wound clearly requiring sutures.

He began complaining of chest pain on February 5th, but the medical staff dismissed his concerns. After checking his vitals, a nurse accused him of seeking attention and sent him back to lockdown. It wasn't until days later, when the pain became unbearable, that he was forced to flood his room just to get another staff member's attention. Even then, he didn't receive emergency care until February 10th, and I wasn't notified until February 13th from Felicia Bowles stating my son was in stable condition at the hospital.

They continue to keep him in lockdown for days at a time without phone calls, showers, or basic necessities, using staffing shortages as an excuse.

Felicia Bowles has been particularly rude and unprofessional, raising serious concerns about the quality of care being provided.


On February 19th (yesterday), Dr. Clark and Nurse Felicia Bowles refused to send my son out for treatment, despite his pain and an allergic reaction to medication. It was only after I emailed the supervisor of the doctors that I received a call back, and they finally ensured my son was taken to the hospital for evaluation.

My child's rights are being violated, ignored, and dangerously neglected. This is a life-threatening issue, and immediate action must be taken to ensure his safety and well-being.

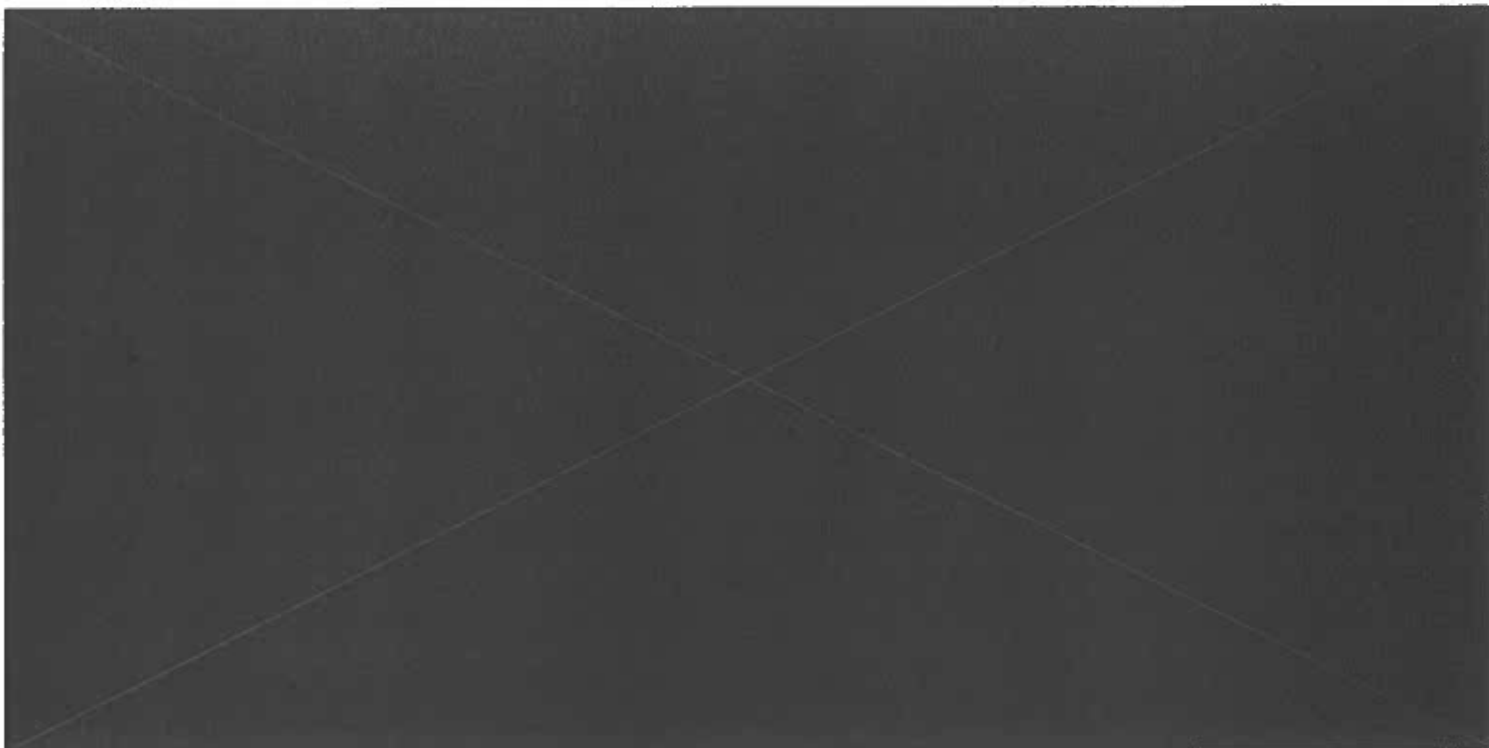
I also feel that my rights as a parent are being disregarded and removed, leaving me powerless to advocate for my child's health and safety.

You should also know that the kids are being locked down for up to three days at a time, with no access to showers, sunlight, or the ability to contact their loved ones. This treatment is not only inhumane but completely unacceptable.

To make matters worse, my son was wondering why I hadn't visited him in the hospital. He kept asking the staff if they had informed me, and they repeatedly told him "yes." In reality, I wasn't notified until the same day as his discharge. The ironic part is that they called me Feb 11 to say visitation had resumed for Sun Feb 16, completely unaware that my son was hospitalized at the time. It's clear there is a severe lack of communication within their own system.







**In your own words, describe what happened**

My child does not have access to a phone to make regular calls home. The phone on the unit has been broken for more than a month. I have address with unit counselor. I have asked during team meeting when it would be fixed, who to contact to make sure repair request has been issued. The unit counselor continuously say she has no information. Only time he has been able to call home is about once a week from the unit counselors office via speaker phone. There is no reasonable amount of privacy.

Per the NIC: Youth have rights to reasonable access to telephones to communicate with their loved ones.[66] Standards issued by ACA and JDAI require that youth can place two phone calls during admission and twice weekly during the length of stay. Staff should not deprive youth of phone calls as a disciplinary measure, and should not listen to or record conversations without specific and reasonable suspicion of criminal activity or threat to facility security.[67]







## **Board of the Department of Juvenile Justice**

Dear Members of the Department of Juvenile Justice Board,

I am writing to formally express my deep concerns regarding the ongoing conditions at Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center. These issues not only violate basic human rights but also undermine the rehabilitative purpose that such institutions are meant to serve.

**1. Unjustified Cancellation of Visitation:**

Visitation is being canceled without apparent reason, often cited as a "safety issue" with no further explanation. This denies both the incarcerated children and their families critical time to maintain familial bonds and emotional support.

**2. Lack of Respect from Staff:**

From upper management to frontline staff, there is a consistent pattern of disrespect toward the incarcerated youth and their families. This hostile environment further isolates the children and undermines their mental well-being.

**3. Severe Nutritional Deficiency:**

The nutrition provided is wholly inadequate. My son has lost over 40 pounds while in the facility, a clear indication of neglect. Proper nutrition is a fundamental right, and such drastic weight loss poses serious health risks.

**4. Extended Isolation and Denial of Basic Hygiene:**

Children are being locked in their rooms for up to three to four consecutive days without access to showers or basic personal care. This is not only inhumane but also a direct violation of their rights and dignity.

**5. Violation of Educational Rights:**

My son has missed over three weeks of school, depriving him of his constitutional right to education. This negligence jeopardizes his future and contradicts the rehabilitative mission of the juvenile justice system.

**6. Isolation from Family:**

Incarcerated children are being denied access to phones, preventing them from contacting their loved ones. This isolation further exacerbates their emotional distress and contradicts the principles of rehabilitation.

**7. Leadership Instability:**

Bon Air has undergone over five changes in superintendents and counselors, creating an unstable environment that negatively impacts the children. These constant shifts make it difficult for youth to build trust and receive consistent support.



**8. Retaliation Against Families Speaking Out:**

Perhaps most alarming is the pattern of retaliation against children when their parents speak up about these injustices. Any parent who dares to advocate for their child risks their child facing further mistreatment from staff. This culture of fear and intimidation is unacceptable and must be addressed immediately.

**9. Misuse of Allocated Funds:**

Our government allocates approximately \$80,000 per incarcerated child annually, with even more funding provided if the child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This raises a serious question: Where is that money going? My son is certainly not receiving even 5% of that funding in terms of proper care, education, nutrition, or rehabilitation services.

These ongoing issues demonstrate systemic neglect and a failure to uphold the standards of care and rehabilitation expected from a juvenile correctional facility. I urge the Board to conduct a thorough investigation into the conditions at Bon Air and implement immediate corrective measures to protect the well-being and rights of the children under its care.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. I look forward to your response and the steps you will take to address these serious concerns.

Sincerely,

A very concerned parent.

down stairs row 100  
to our every Friday, Staff were performing  
have 5 min. residents Searches on 10-24-24  
10-25-24 through 11-1-24 and through 10-31-24  
PAGE ① Front

We have been down in our rooms/cells without an LMA (hour out of our room). On Wednesday 10-30-24, Unit [redacted] had a natural gas leak, me as well as [redacted] other residents were exposed to the fumes for 20-30 minutes before being removed from the unit. We were escorted to the existing Gym until further notice, [redacted] residents were affected by the fumes that we were inhaling into our body. Approximately 30 mins to an hour after being secured in the Gym, Med Nurse [redacted] arrived at the Gym. She put the thing on my arm to check our blood pressure and the thing on my finger to check my heart rate. [redacted] said that I was fine, when really I knew I was not okay. The med nurse only asked me if I wanted water. I developed a cough and shortage of breath is what I told the nurse, she still insisted on me drinking water. I asked to call my mother, as I am still a juvenile, they told me that



Back

they only did medical and told me to talk to my JCS about that. I was when we never able to notify my mother regarding the issue and was left in the Gym until about 5:00-or 5:30 p.m. Still to this day no one has come to address the situation with me, or any of the other Residents. Thursday, 10-30-24 @ 7:00 p.m. we were escorted to unit [redacted] in hand shackles. Once we were secured in our cells on unit [redacted]

the whole unit, including our cells were filled with the Aroma of bleach. There was no ~~over~~ air-flow coming in or out of the building. The Staff left resident [redacted] in the cell having a panic attack for ~~roughly~~ roughly 30 minutes, he was also throwing up, as well as coughing up blood. At about 9:00 they finally turned on the Air-Conditioning unit. On,

Friday, 11-1-24, I woke up to water and poop @ about 11:00 or 12:00 all over my floor as a result of one of my peers caused the bathroom and was accompanied by a flooded toilet that would



PAGE 2

Front

stop flushing, and also went up through 2 other toilets which flooded as well. The flood was caused by a former resident that flushed a pair of boxers down their toilet. The whole hallway was flooded with water, and poop. We were all left on the unit with the smell of poop and bleach until about 4:50pm or 5:15pm. When staff escorted us [redacted] to unit [redacted]. Me and my peers did not receive a shower on, ~~10-30-24~~ 10-30-24 ~~nor~~ or on 10-31-24. We finally were able to shower on 11-1-24. 11-2-24, we remained on lockdown with no hour out of our rooms. 11-3-24, we remained on lockdown, again with no hour out of our rooms. Thursday, 12/5/24, I was on unit [redacted] and [redacted] entered the unit and told us that we had to go down. We went down around 4:30-5:00. Other staff came on the unit and began doing searches, [redacted] and a few other Iron Air staff. When they searched [redacted] they ripped all my pictures and posters off of wall. ~~When~~ When returning to my room there was nothing but a book, and a pair of cloths to take



Back

a shower with and my blanket, mat, and sheet. I did not receive my shower that night and was only allowed one trip to use the bathroom, as there are no toilets in the rooms. Friday, 12/6/24, I came out to take my shower at about [REDACTED]. We were told that we were on "lockdown" and remained in our cells the rest of the day. At approximately 5:30 or 6:00 PM, staff escorted me and my peers [REDACTED] to visit [REDACTED]. From there, we didn't receive our showers that night, but got them on our LMA (1 hour out of your room) the next day (Thursday and Friday they didn't let [REDACTED] visit attend school). Saturday, 12/7/24, we ~~remained~~ remained on "lockdown" with our LMA and took our showers. Sunday, 12/8/24, I was gladly able to participate in my weekly visitation from [REDACTED]. I returned back to visit [REDACTED] and remained on "lockdown" until it was time for my LMA. Monday, 12/9/24, They allowed us to attend school and got our LMA. Later that night, around 5:00 or 6:00 PM, they did a big facility



move and moved everyone to a different unit with all different people. I was moved to unit [redacted] and was moved into a room with hair all over the floor, poop in the toilet and a ripped up mat. They gave me a couple of wet Bleach wipes and told me that is all they could give me, and that they weren't allowed to open our doors. 12/13/24, I was able to attend [redacted] period, but not [redacted] 12/16/24 I was not able to attend class at all, and 12/17/24, I wasn't able to attend any classes either. 12/18/24, I was not able to attend any of my classes. 12/19/24, I was not able to attend school at all and remained on "lockdown" all day. With no LMA, they said we were down because of a plumbing issue, but ended up searching the unit. 12/20/24, we remained on "lockdown" all day with no LMA. 1/6/25, we were not able to attend school and remained on lockdown all day with no LMA. 1/10/25, I was not able to attend school and remained on a unit with other residents that "bucket" + flooded their room/unit. I am being



Back

treated like a caged animal! Something needs to happen with this facility, there is NO rehabilitation at all, the counselors that are supposed to meet with each resident on a weekly basis rarely comes to check on me. There is nothing good about this facility! I have been here for [REDACTED] I have no [REDACTED] treatments that are required by the courts. It has been one thing after another with this facility. The way ~~that~~ we are treated in here is covered up anytime we bring it up. It's not right and they know it! They simply do Not Care. I also was not given a shower on 1/9/25 \*was not offered an opportunity to take it the next morning, 1/10/25. 1/12/25. I was not able to participate in visitation, as it was canceled. ~~It was canceled~~ We were also on lockdown all day with no LMA.



On top of all that, I haven't called home  
[redacted] weeks, my mail has also been being  
held back. My mother sent me a [redacted]  
a few pictures [redacted] it is my  
[redacted] and I have yet to receive it. About  
[redacted] weeks ago now she also sent me [redacted]  
envelopes with [redacted] in each enve  
lope and I have not received that either  
1/15/25, and 1/16/25 I did not receive my  
shower. I received my shower, 1/17/25,  
at about [redacted] 1/18/25, I got 30  
minutes out of my room throughout the  
whole day. 1/19/25, I was not able to  
attend visitation, as it was canceled for  
the second week in a row! 1/22/25, I was  
able to attend school, but when I returned  
to the unit I/we remained on "lockdown"  
for the remainder of the day. However I  
was able to finally make a phone call  
home, but also had a treatment team and  
was not able to attend, but it was held  
without me. 1/25/25, we were all lockdown,  
however for some reason unit [redacted] was on  
the floor while the rest of the facility  
of



Back [REDACTED]

was on "lockdown." 2/1/25, ~~we~~ we were on "lockdown" while residents on other units were on the floor, all day. Unit [REDACTED] was on "lockdown" all day with no LMA. I also did not receive my dinner tray, Gima cookies or bag of chips that all came with the dinner tray. A couple other residents did not receive what they were supposed to. Which led to [REDACTED] residents bucking and getting restrained. The unit was left trashed. I have asked for a Grievance multiple times throughout everything in these papers, and still have yet to receive one. That is another big violation of my rights. I also did not receive my shower on 2/1/25. And on 2/2/25 we remained on lockdown all day with no LMA and no shower. 2/4/25 I was able to attend my [REDACTED] period class, When I got back to the unit we had to secure, and were told that we are on "lockdown." We remained on "lockdown" for the remainder of the day.

Page 5

Front

I did not receive my shower on 2/4/25.  
2/5/25, we remained on lockdown with  
no LMA. 2/6/25 we were on lockdown  
until about 1:30pm when we were  
finally able to attend school for  
[redacted] 2/7/25

we were able to attend [redacted] period class  
but not [redacted] however we did finally  
get out of our cell for unit floor time.

2/8/25, we did clean up and came out  
our rooms for 30 minutes. After that we  
didn't come out of our rooms for the rest  
of the day, and one staff was doing  
checks on our unit as well as another  
unit. 2/9/25, we remained on lockdown  
all day. 2/9/25, staff left us on the  
unit, in our rooms while there was a  
fire somewhere in the facility. We could  
smell the flames of whatever was on fire.

We also did not receive showers on  
2/9/25. 2/10/25, we remained on lockdown  
all day with no LMA. 2/10/25, we were  
not able to attend school. 2/11/25, we came  
out our rooms for about an hour around



# Back

8:00 or 8:30 AM, but were not able to attend school. After going down at about 9:30 we remained on lockdown for the remainder of the day. I did not receive my shower on 2/11/25. 2/12/25, we remained on lockdown all day with no LMA. We didn't come out of our rooms at all. Staff told us that they cannot open any doors and that we were under a state of emergency. At 6:11pm, 6:16pm, 6:30pm, 7:00pm, 7:10pm, and 8:00pm the facility power shut off multiple times, we were left in our rooms. I also did not receive my shower on 2/12/25. 2/13/25, I was finally able to get a shower, but remained on lockdown all day with no LMA. 2/13/25, we weren't able to attend school but were finally able to get some floor time/being out of our rooms.