

**JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF MARYLAND**

2023 THIRD QUARTER REPORT

Maryland Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU)

The Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU) at the Office of the Maryland Attorney General is responsible for reporting on Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) operated and licensed facilities across the state. Monitors from the unit conduct unannounced visits to these sites to guard against abuse and ensure youth receive appropriate treatment and services.

The mission of the JJMU is to promote the transformation of the juvenile justice system into one that meets the needs of Maryland's youth, families, and communities. This mission is accomplished by collaborating with all who are involved with the system.

The Unit has access to DJS incident and case notes databases and to DJS internal investigation and grievance documents. Monitors spend considerable time gathering information and observing all aspects of operations. We sit in on activities and classes, interview youth, staff and administrators, and review incident-related footage and original incident report documentation. The JJMU issues public reports covering each calendar quarter. These reports include data and analysis concerning treatment of and services provided to youth in DJS detention and placement facilities throughout our state. Formal responses from DJS and the Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP - which assumed responsibility for education services in DJS facilities at the end of June of 2022) are included within our published reports.

The JJMU has been instrumental in driving positive changes in the Maryland juvenile justice system since its formation in the wake of widespread systemic abuse issues. The activities of the monitoring unit increase the transparency and accountability of the juvenile justice system and raise awareness of the needs of justice-involved Maryland youth. We will continue to push for the adoption of best practices as we evaluate current and emerging research that serves to both enhance public safety and produce positive outcomes for young people in contact with the juvenile justice system.

JJMU 2023 Third Quarter Report Compendium

The Maryland Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU) issues public reports covering each calendar quarter that include data and analysis concerning treatment of and services provided to youth in Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) directly run and licensed facilities throughout Maryland. Enclosed please find the unit's compilation of third quarter 2023 facility-specific and system-wide based reports.

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services' response and a response from the Juvenile Services Education Program are also included in this document, as indicated on the contents page.

The JJMU 2023 Third Quarter Report compendium was produced by Margi Joshi, Nick Moroney, Tim Snyder, and Marvin Stone. Thanks to Taran Henley, Fritz Schantz, and Maria Welker.

We respectfully submit this report to the Governor, members of the Maryland General Assembly, the Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Services, and to the State Advisory Board for Juvenile Services as required under Maryland law.

Current and prior reports of the Maryland Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit and related responses are available at:

<http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/JJM/default.aspx>



JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF MARYLAND

January 2024

The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor
State of Maryland

The Honorable Bill Ferguson, President of the Senate
Maryland General Assembly

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker of the House of Delegates
Maryland General Assembly

Members of the General Assembly

The Honorable Vincent Schiraldi, Secretary
Department of Juvenile Services

Members of the State Advisory Board for Juvenile Services

Dear Governor Moore, Senate President Ferguson, Speaker of the House Jones, Secretary Schiraldi, and State Advisory Board Members:

This report covers the third quarter of 2023 and offers brief updates on conditions in each detention and placement facility operated by and licensed by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department).

During the past few years, the state of Maryland has made strides in reducing unnecessary incarceration of youth in DJS detention and placement centers, but reducing racial disparities in incarceration rates remains a challenge. The deep end of Maryland's juvenile justice system is plagued by stark racial disparities. The vast majority of incarcerated youth in DJS facilities are young people of color, and youth of color are twice as likely to be detained and committed to custody as white youth in Maryland. Youth charged as adults comprise roughly 60% of youth in DJS-operated detention centers, and Black youth made up 83.3 percent of youth charged as adults and detained in DJS facilities pending transfer in Fiscal Year 2022.

Youth charged as adults can spend several months and up to and over a year in detention awaiting court decisions or adjudication of their case. Detention centers are not set up to provide extended provision of services to young people and their families. Short-term service provision has traditionally been the norm and the focus at DJS detention centers because children and young people charged as juveniles, in contrast to young people charged as adults, are typically held for only a few days to a couple of weeks before court disposition occurs.

Youth in the juvenile justice system deemed in need of residential rehabilitative services through DJS are sent to one of three remotely located congregate facilities in western Maryland. The removal of youth to areas far from their home community, family, and culture exacerbates the inherent isolation of incarceration, and kids often deteriorate mentally and behaviorally when transitioning from regionally located detention centers to placement sites. Departmental leadership at DJS is in the process of examining alternatives to this expensive and unsuccessful approach and has indicated a commitment to bolster the utilization of local community resources.

For more details see the section on systemic reforms (pages 3-7).

Respectfully submitted,

Nick Moroney

Nick Moroney
Director, Maryland Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit

Cc: Attorney General Anthony Brown
State of Maryland Treasurer's Office
The Office of the Comptroller of Maryland

JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING /UNIT 2023 THIRD QUARTER REPORT

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DJS Hardware Secure Detention

DJS Committed Placement

Short-term, pre-disposition/pending placement:

- Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC)
- Cheltenham Youth Detention Center (CYDC)
- Charles H. Hickey, Jr., School (Hickey)
- Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC)
- Lower Eastern Shore Children's Center (LESCC)

Long-term, post-disposition:

- Victor Cullen Center (Cullen)
- Backbone Mountain and Green Ridge youth centers (two youth centers)

Incident and Population Trends Inside DJS-Operated Detention Centers and DJS-Operated Committed Placement Facilities

Third quarter 2023 population and incident numbers versus the third quarter of 2022:

- ❖ The average daily population of youth incarcerated in both DJS secure detention and secure committed placement facilities continued to rise during the third quarter as increasing numbers of children and young people who have been "charged as adults" entered Maryland's courts and carceral systems.
- ❖ The average daily population (ADP) of youth rose in all DJS-operated secure detention centers and committed placement centers. The increases follow and add to similar growth during the second quarter of 2023 compared to the same time period last year.
- ❖ Young people of color comprise the vast majority of incarcerated young people in DJS detention and placement facilities.
- ❖ Together with the population increases, there was an increase in the number of incidents involving aggression in all DJS-operated facilities in the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.
- ❖ Physical restraints of youth by staff also increased in all DJS-operated detention centers except for BCJJC and at the committed placement sites (the Youth Centers and Victor Cullen) during the reporting period, when compared with the third quarter of 2022. Green Ridge youth center had an exceptionally high number of physical restraints of youth by staff.

- ❖ The number of incidents involving the use of mechanical restraints (handcuffs and or leg irons) increased in committed placement facilities (the Youth Centers and Victor Cullen) during the third quarter of 2023 when compared with the same period last year.
- ❖ Instances of mechanical restraint usage on youth inside secure detention facilities increased at CYDC but decreased at BCJJC, Hickey and WMCC. LESCC did not use mechanical restraints during the third quarter of 2023.
- ❖ There were decreases in the number of incidents involving seclusion inside secure detention centers at BCJJC, Hickey, LESCC and WMCC but increases at CYDC. Instances of seclusion also increased in committed placement at the Victor Cullen Center.
- ❖ There were 23 reports of suicide ideation during the third quarter of 2023 (down from 31 during the same period last year); zero reported suicide attempts (versus one attempt during the third quarter of 2022); and 6 reported instances of self-injurious behavior at DJS-operated detention and committed placement facilities during the third quarter of 2023 (compared to 17 reported for the third quarter of 2022).

JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM IN MARYLAND

Juvenile Justice Reform in Maryland

The deep end of Maryland's juvenile justice system is plagued by stark racial disparities. The vast majority of incarcerated youth in DJS facilities are young people of color, and youth of color are twice as likely to be detained and committed to custody as white youth in Maryland.¹ Youth charged as adults comprise roughly 60% of youth in DJS-operated detention centers², and Black youth made up 83.3 percent of youth charged as adults and detained in DJS facilities pending transfer in FY22.³

During the past few years, the state of Maryland has made strides in reducing unnecessary incarceration of youth in DJS detention and placement centers, but reducing racial disparities in incarceration rates remains a challenge. Black and Hispanic/Latinx young people still form the majority of incarcerated young Marylanders. In addition to being overrepresented in the deep end of Maryland's juvenile justice system, youth of color are also disproportionately victims of violent crime. At the same time, youth of color are underrepresented when it comes to community-based rehabilitation options such as diversion or probation.⁴

Most youth charged as adults can be held in DJS detention centers where they now comprise the majority of the incarcerated young people in detention. Youth charged as adults constitute over 50% of the population held in secure detention by DJS at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center and at the Hickey detention center in Baltimore County, for example. Youth charged as adults can spend several months and up to and over a year in detention awaiting court decisions or adjudication of their case. Detention centers are not set up to provide extended provision of services to young people and their families. Short-term service provision has traditionally been the norm and the focus at DJS detention centers because children and young people charged as juveniles, in contrast to young people charged as adults, are typically held for only a few days to a couple of weeks before court disposition occurs.

Youth in the juvenile justice system deemed in need of residential rehabilitative services through DJS are sent to one of three remotely located congregate facilities in western Maryland. The removal of youth to areas far from their home community, family, and culture exacerbates the inherent isolation of incarceration, and kids often deteriorate mentally and behaviorally when transitioning from regionally located detention centers to placement sites. Departmental leadership at DJS is in the process of examining alternatives to this expensive and unsuccessful approach and has indicated a commitment to bolster the utilization of local community resources

¹ Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (September 2023), Research Brief: Putting Youth Crime in Maryland in Context, pages 23-24, available at: https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/MD-DJS-Juvenile-Crime-Data-Brief_20230912.pdf

² Maryland Department of Juvenile Services Daily Population Sheet, November 28, 2023.

³ Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (September 2023), Research Brief: Putting Youth Crime in Maryland in Context, pages 23-24, available at: https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/MD-DJS-Juvenile-Crime-Data-Brief_20230912.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

– both non-residential and residential - to help ensure specialized, individualized, culturally-responsive support is available for young people and families in contact with the Maryland legal system.

Mass incarceration has deleterious effects on young people of color and fails to address the root causes underlying delinquency.

Whether charged as a juvenile or as an adult, securely detained young people in DJS facilities are isolated from loved ones and sources of social support and miss out on opportunities in their schools and communities. Detention centers have never been equipped to provide youth with individualized help or support. Taking BCJJC as an example again, there isn't even any appreciable outdoor space for incarcerated young people to get regular fresh air.

The severing of home, family and community ties has substantial negative effects on these young men and young women. Imprisonment does not address the challenges faced by these youth and their families. Many youth, their families, and their communities already suffer from financially vulnerable situations and a paucity of appropriate education resources and career opportunities – these negative conditions are exacerbated through incarceration which harms their spirit and stymies their progress and growth.

During a recent JJMU visit to a DJS detention center, a youth had a long conversation with a monitor about the circumstances that led him to being detained. His mother died of COVID-19 while he was living in another state. He was sent to Maryland to live with his dad who he does not know very well. He was a diligent student before the pandemic but shifting to virtual instead of in-person school in addition to adapting to a new school environment was a major struggle for him. He became disengaged from his education and began hanging out with negative peers to squelch feelings of isolation and grief. When asked what supports he needed to thrive, he said he wanted family therapy to help him form a bond with his father, grief counseling, and a religious mentor he could meet with regularly in person as religion had been a source of positive support and structure for him. He also wanted to be able to attend virtual school at his community school and receive individualized academic tutoring to help him with the one remaining class he needed to complete to graduate.

Detention is not equipped to provide any of these services to this young man, or really any individualized services for any young person. Each kid has a unique story and circumstantial background that led to their present situation. But this particular young person is just one of many facing several months or even a year of incarceration before he finds out whether he will be treated as a child who needs services and supports (and placed on a path to access such services) or if he will be treated as an adult criminal actor.

JJMU regularly receives emails and phone calls from worried parents asking if they can place their kids in detention. When we explore the motivation behind these frantic pleas for help, parents say that their kids are struggling with mental health issues, trauma, grief, negative

influences or unsafe living conditions, substance abuse and sexual exploitation. They believe that juvenile jail or juvenile prison is the only setting where their child might be relatively safe and receive some services. It is a tragic state of affairs when parents in Maryland families believe the only option for their children to receive help or intervention is through incarceration. This situation tells us that we have major structural deficits in service availability for struggling young people and their families in Maryland communities. In place of prolonged incarceration, children and young people should be able to access local programming through DJS and other youth serving entities.

Strengthening families and communities in Maryland and creating a continuum of community-based services will enhance public safety in our state.

An unexplored area of consensus among system stakeholders is a shared recognition that something needs to be done to bolster the ability of the Department of Juvenile Services to better serve youth and communities and enhance public safety. While there are undoubtedly shortcomings within Maryland’s juvenile system, efforts and initiatives being undertaken by the new DJS administration have the potential to lead to better results than the status quo.

For example, the Department of Juvenile Services (in their recently released data-based report) committed to “working in partnership with ... the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and the Department of Human Services to collaboratively invest in neighborhoods throughout Maryland where [DJS’] clients live to not only improve their individual chances of success, but to provide increased opportunities for their neighborhoods as a whole to thrive.” [The DJS Report⁵ was published on September 12th, 2023.] This represents a significant shift by the Department and the state towards investing in community-based resources and crime prevention rather than sending young people in conflict with the law to be incarcerated far from their homes and communities – the current and historic approach that has not worked to reduce recidivism and increase public safety.

In addition, DJS leadership acknowledges issues with services and residential programs, but they are working to institute changes so resources are available in communities and close to the homes of young people in contact with the justice system.

In his September 13th, 2023, briefing on juvenile justice-related issues before the House Judiciary Committee in the legislature, DJS Secretary Vincent Schiraldi noted, “the continuum of residential options and community options has atrophied over time” and said that, in his opinion, “we overuse residential treatment facilities, our DJS residential facilities, and group homes.” He noted the absence of residential drug treatment programs for young people and pointed to a need to widen and deepen community-based resources, “so that when judges are making dispositional decisions and prosecutors are advocating for them, they’ll have a bigger

⁵ The DJS report, including sources and citations, is available at: https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/MD-DJS-Juvenile-Crime-Data-Brief_20230912.pdf

menu.” If this happens, he believes it “will reduce recidivism and also make the system work better.”

The Secretary told the committee that the Department is working to address gaps in availability of resources around the state and is providing some services through contracts and grants, but he cautioned that, a “continuum of care that’s been decimated over years” will not be rebuilt “with the press of a button.” The state of Maryland should support efforts by DJS and at the same time carefully measure short- and long-term outcomes of initiatives and programs.

Changes are needed to improve public safety including through thoughtfully investing in community resources that will provide services and supports that can break negative cycles and help make sure young people do not end up in courts and jails and placements and prisons in the first place. Promising reforms being instituted through DJS involve cooperation with community entities and stakeholders from other agencies.

The DJS report highlighted the serious and tragic impact that gun violence has had on children of color and their communities. To help address this public health crisis in Maryland, DJS announced the launching of comprehensive new initiatives for the young people most in danger of being involved as victims or perpetrators of gun violence. The Department’s new approach is rooted in “[n]ational research and practice [which shows] that when interventions are targeted towards the highest risk youth [to] address the trauma youth experience from either witnessing or being victimized by violence [and] build on young people’s strengths in a developmentally appropriate manner, and divert lower risk and younger youth, those interventions yield better outcomes for both youth and public safety”.

The Department’s report includes details about the new initiatives:

- ✓ *The Thrive Academy* will focus on wraparound services for youth who are at high risk of involvement in gun violence; and
- ✓ *Youth Engagement and Safety Strategies Improvement Teams* will involve prosecutors, law enforcement, community leaders, victims, and family members to advise on the best approaches to preventing gun involvement by DJS-involved youth in their communities.

As the Department begins to shift toward community-based resources to help young people succeed, we should understand that DJS alone cannot comprehensively address structural conditions that contribute to concentrated violence in certain areas. DJS alone cannot address the trauma that young people living in affected communities experience as a result of their exposure to violence. Support from government leaders and collaboration among individual stakeholders and community-based organizations focused on ensuring the provision of mental health, education, and employment within under-resourced neighborhoods is vital in the effort to tackle and address the complex root causes of violent and non-violent crimes.

**MAKING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT A PRIORITY
INSIDE DJS FACILITIES**

Making Family Engagement and Community Involvement a Priority Inside DJS Facilities

Youth thrive when their families and communities have an active role in their lives. Increased family engagement has been shown to improve social skills, enhance behavioral and mental health and promote academic success for young people involved in the juvenile justice system.⁶ Families of young people in DJS custody want to be positively engaged in their child's lives, but the inherent isolation of incarceration and lack of prioritization of family and community connections for incarcerated youth creates barriers to meaningful involvement.

As DJS looks to reform its facilities into institutions responsive to child and family needs, special attention should be given to developing a community and family-centered approach to the treatment, services, and care provided to youths inside facilities. Consideration should be given to the following recommendations stemming from common youth and family concerns that arise during monitoring visits:

Ask youth and their families which members they define as part of their family and allow vetted extended family members to be placed on a child's call and visitation list for regular visits. Begin this process when youth enter the facility so that family support can be harnessed as soon as a child begins their incarceration. Proactively identify any positive adult role models in a child's life (coaches, mentors, teachers, community members) during the intake and orientation period and add these individuals to a child's call and visitation list and make them eligible for regular visitation following standard vetting processes.

The Department's website advertises its family engagement visitation rules on individual facility websites as indicating that "significant persons are permitted, meaning any individual identified by the youth who plays a supportive role in the youth's life. This could include a coach, mentor, teacher, or an additional family member, etc."⁷ In reality, this practice does not get carried out systematically at the facility level. The definition of family is still primarily based on a Eurocentric model of a nuclear family composed of parents and immediate siblings even though in many cultures, extended family members (aunts, cousins, etc.) play just as important a role in supporting and raising children as the immediate family. Any individuals outside a child's immediate family who wish to visit must go through a special process to get approved for a one-time "special visit" and approval for such a visit is at the discretion of individual case managers

⁶ Shaw, Stephanie and Angus-Kleinman, Jacob, Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice Systems: Building a Strategy and Shifting a Culture, Justice Center, The Council of State Governments, available at: <https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/family-engagement-in-juvenile-justice-systems/>

⁷ See, for example, BCJJC information card, available at: <https://djs.maryland.gov/Documents/facilities/Baltimore-City-Juvenile-Justice-Center.pdf>

and facility administrators. The process is cumbersome, time-consuming, overly bureaucratic and frustrating for incarcerated young people, their families and their advocates.

For example, during the reporting period, a Hispanic youth made a request to the monitor that his aunt be allowed to visit him in detention. He explained that growing up, his mom and dad worked long hours and his mother would drop him off at his aunt's house for childcare. He considered his aunt to be his "second mom" and his cousins to be his siblings and felt closer to them at times than his own immediate family. When he approached his facility case manager about the request, his case manager informed him that only immediate family members could be placed on his visit list. He pleaded for the monitor to help. It took two months of advocacy and repeated requests by the JJMU for the youth to finally receive a visit with his aunt. Clearly there were not any interested individuals at the facility level that were systematically trying to identify this child's (and all other children's) adult support system in the community and working with the family and community to arrange for those individuals to be able to visit and communicate on a consistent basis with the child during his incarceration.

Ask families what services and needs they require to help support their children through incarceration and upon release and work and make sure these identified needs are met.

Families of justice-involved youth may face a myriad of challenges that affect their ability to engage in their child's treatment and care including housing and food insecurity, language barriers, difficulty accessing substance abuse and mental health treatment, legal problems, lack of reliable transportation, and trouble navigating the juvenile justice system and understanding how best to advocate for their child. Instead of the juvenile justice system being a partner and an ally in helping address and meet their child's needs, families end up seeing justice system involvement and incarceration as an unremitting stressor.

In order to shift this perception, DJS should view parents as partners in a child's treatment and work to support and address family issues that may impede a child's successful re-entry into the community.

Partner with community organizations to provide mentorship and support to youth while incarcerated with the goal of continuing these positive relationships upon release.

Prior to COVID-19 and at times during previous administrations, the Department had various programs offered by local organizations located near facilities that provided valuable programming for youth. At BCJJC, community organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters would run after-school groups on detention center units and Baltimore Youth Arts would provide art classes to incarcerated young people. These activities helped local adults form connections with kids that would continue when the youth were released. With the ending of the COVID-19 public health emergency, such programs should be re-instated and expanded across all DJS facilities.

At Cheltenham Youth Detention Center, efforts have begun to implement community involvement through a variety of programming options including through a local education non-profit providing a STEM education program for kids, religious groups offering on-site services for interested youth, and visits from motivational speakers with lived experience similar that of the youth population. There is also a developing partnership with local law enforcement to help foster better relationships between young people and police. Kids often report how meaningful these programs are and request that more of this type of programming be offered and on a more consistent basis.

Place kids receiving rehabilitative programming and services through DJS-operated placement facilities closer to home to make it easier to foster family and community ties, provide family services (such as family therapy), and more effectively transition kids back upon release.

Currently, the location of DJS placement sites serve to further sever incarcerated youths' ties to family and community. DJS placement centers are located in rural western Maryland and are often a two-to-three-hour drive from the communities that the vast majority of incarcerated youth call home. Community engagement and involvement is sporadic and difficult to cultivate and young people in placement often report that they have more meaningful interactions and opportunities in regionally located detention centers than they do in placement. Moving residential placements closer to their homes would make it easier for the families and their communities to be involved in treatment planning and decision-making and would also make it easier to facilitate the individualized resources and supports upon re-entry that are necessary for future success.

Until placement sites can become more regionalized and more tailored to individual youth needs, DJS should provide consistent transportation assistance to families who need help getting to and from the western Maryland placement sites and expand (rather than take away) the use of technology such as video calls to help families stay connected.

Facility administrators should increase opportunities for family engagement and community involvement inside facilities.

Creative options to foster family engagement should be expanded, and initiatives that were implemented in the past with proven success should be re-introduced. For example, mental health clinicians would in past years provide opportunities for youth and their families to utilize services during family visitation sessions including the teaching of communication and conflict resolution to visiting family members. In addition, a structured family engagement activity would occur once a month at each facility to foster more family involvement.

Some young people incarcerated in DJS facilities are parents themselves, yet requests to see their children are considered a "special visit" and are at the discretion of facility leadership. Children of incarcerated youth and their children's approved adult escort should be placed on

the visitation list as a matter of policy and they should be able to visit in accordance with regular visitation requirements. In addition, innovative programs like the young fathers parenting group at BCJJC (or similar parenting classes) should be available to all incarcerated young parents in DJS custody.

Expand and improve telephone services.

The most frequent request from incarcerated youth is to have more contact with their families. DJS allows 85 to 90 minutes of phone contact home per week. During the COVID-19 pandemic, DJS allowed youth to place video calls through their facility case manager in lieu of two regular phone calls and this allowed family members to see their child while talking to him or her. Such access was especially vital for kids whose parents had a hard time visiting because youth were detained or placed far from home or because of transportation hardships and/or work conflicts.⁸ Immediately prior to the Thanksgiving holiday (November 2023), allotted video calls were eliminated, and youth did not receive any additional phone time (beyond the 85 to 90 minutes) to make up for the loss.

Understandably, youth were visibly upset following this decision. Boys from western Maryland who were displaced from Western Maryland Children's Center due to the conversion of the detention facility to a girls' facility and who are now 2 to 3 hours away from their families reported that they may never be able to see their loved ones during the time they are incarcerated. Case managers were provided the option to provide youth who don't receive in-person visits with a video call, but this service is at the discretion of and depends on the availability of case management staff at a time of widespread staffing shortages.

Another youth asked if mental health workers could take individual pictures of the kids every three weeks and send them to their parents "just so they know what we look like and that we are ok". Other youth asked that the regular phone call allotment be increased so that they could at the very least talk to their parents more often and for more time over the phone.

The majority of youth phone calls to families from inside DJS facilities are provided through phones located on the living units and these are supplied and serviced by a prison communications company called Global Tel Link (GTL). GTL phones frequently malfunction or break, and connection is often of poor quality. In addition, customer service response to handle issues that arise with the phones and the phone lines is often hard to secure and untimely, and the contract between GTL and DJS does not allow for regular, routine maintenance of the phones. During the third quarter of 2023, the two GTL phones on a unit at Cheltenham Youth Detention Center were broken for months while repeated attempts were made by case

⁸ For example, a family of a youth from Ocean City on the eastern shore of Maryland would have a four hour drive each way to the Victor Cullen Center in Sabillasville; a four-and-a-half drive each way to Green Ridge Youth Center in Flintstone; or a five-and-a-half hour drive each way to Backbone Mountain Youth Center in Swanton. Families are allotted two hours of visitation according to DJS visitation policies.

management staff and the monitor to have the issue addressed. Case managers have also reported that they spend hours on the phone with GTL trying to resolve technical issues that arise. The Department should ensure that facilities have a reliable provider of phone services for youth as that is the primary mode of contact that kids have with their families.

Facility operations leadership at DJS headquarters and in placement and detention centers should always consider the impact on youth and their families when making decisions and should establish policies, procedures, and practices that will engage and empower a youth's local community and family support network. Strategic involvement of youth families and communities in youth services and care will lead to safer communities as well as more positive outcomes for kids in contact with the justice system.

DETENTION CENTERS

Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center

The Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC) is a hardware secure (maximum-security) detention center for boys. The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) owns and operates BCJJC. The DJS-rated housing capacity is 120 young people. Black youth represented 87% and Hispanic/Latino youth represented 6% of the total number of young people entering BCJJC during the third quarter of 2023.

BCJJC – Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2021	Q3 2022	Q3 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	29	71	87
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	34	52	79
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	7	4	8
3. Physical Restraint	50	55	51
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	14	13	8
5. Seclusion	19	20	8
6. Contraband	0	7	2
7. Suicide Ideation	3	8	3
8. Suicide Attempt	1	1	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	2	0

The average daily population at BCJJC increased by 22% during the third quarter of 2023 when compared with the same time in 2022. When further comparing the same two time periods:

- The number of youth-on-youth incidents involving aggression also increased while staff use of physical restraints and of handcuffs and shackles on youth inside the facility decreased.
- Reported seclusions and incidents involving contraband also dropped substantially.

Safety and Security

There continues to be incidents of aggression involving multiple youth at BCJJC. In Incident 175343, several students ran past a staffer sitting at the door of a classroom and entered the school hallway to assault youth from another unit as they were walking by.

A youth was targeted and assaulted by peers several times and placed on the infirmary for his safety following the assaults.

As a result of the frequency and severity of these events facility managers periodically restricted movement of youth from residential pods to the school area and other locations within the facility.

Physical Plant

BCJJC had plumbing issues on a number of units that resulted in flooding on the floors of the units (Incident 175332). The floors were mopped but should have been professionally sanitized due to contaminated water.

During the summer, there were temperature fluctuations throughout the building and some rooms were cooler than others and several classrooms were overly hot.

Youth Detained at BCJJC Awaiting Movement To a Treatment Program

Youth who are scheduled for admission to a committed placement facility can begin generalized treatment programming on the pending placement units at BCJJC. This is a significantly positive development for young people incarcerated at BCJJC who otherwise experience “dead time” while awaiting admission to the committed placement facility where they will be going.

The pending placement units should be repainted as the paint was peeling off the walls during the third quarter of 2023.

Basic Needs

Youth in the infirmary lacked access to fresh drinking water. After repeated requests, a water cooler was placed on the unit.

Youth report that detention-issued clothing often tears and wears down in short amounts of time and does not get replaced in a timely manner. Youth also never received summer clothing during the summer months and complained of the heat.

BCJJC has started a staff-led incentive to provide stylist services for youth maintaining good behavior. Stylist care is a frequent request from detained boys who have hair styles such as lochs and braids which require ongoing hair care maintenance. Other facilities should follow the lead of BCJJC and implement similar opportunities for youth to access stylist care.

Medical Care

There were several concerns about the medical care at BCJJC during the third quarter of 2023.

Youth reported to both DJS child advocates and the monitor that medical staff is consistently unresponsive to sick calls. A youth with a gunshot wound to the head who had issues with memory and balance reported that he did not receive his medication on time on several occasions and that his approved 1:1 staffer is often late and the youth is left unattended. The youth began writing about his medical concerns in a journal. Another youth who was in the infirmary at the same time as the wounded youth reported that the medically fragile youth was treated poorly by medical staff for documenting problems with his medical care.

Recreation and Activities for Youth

BCJJC offers a father's group twice a week that youth from any unit can attend. This type of programming should be expanded to other facilities.

There was an organized Labor Day cookout and a Fourth of July celebration for youth and their families.

Youth requested more consistent structured programming, especially during the weekends. A facility games room/arcade that youth could visit in the past to help pass time is no longer functioning and needs new equipment. A long-planned music studio was not operational during the reporting period, even though equipment was purchased for the initiative.

Listening to music on individual MP3 players is a primary means for youth to pass time and to cope inside DJS facilities (in addition to watching TV and movies). Musical content on the MP3 players needs to be more frequently updated, and requests for Spanish language songs from Hispanic youth need to be accommodated.

Education

Starting in mid-2022, an independent Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) Board focused solely on education in DJS facilities took over responsibility for education services inside DJS facilities with implementation and resource assistance from the Department.

Youth on the medical unit did not receive adequate educational support during the third quarter of 2023. Teachers did not visit the unit regularly to provide consistent help and assignments for students during the quarter. The students placed in the infirmary expressed concerns about their academic progress and requested help to receive and complete school assignments so that they could earn credits toward a high school diploma.

There were vacancies at BCJJC for a special education, math, science, and social studies teacher during the third quarter of 2023.

Cheltenham Youth Detention Center

Cheltenham Youth Detention Center (Cheltenham/CYDC), located in Prince George's County, is a hardware secure (locked and fenced) detention center owned and operated by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department). The DJS-rated housing capacity is 72 young people. Black youth represented 77% and Hispanic/Latino youth represented 13% of the total number of young people entering CYDC during the third quarter of 2023.

CYDC– Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2021	Q3 2022	Q3 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	23	37	63
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	1	23	48
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	0	2	3
3. Physical Restraint	10	32	53
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	0	1	16
5. Seclusion	1	14	17
6. Contraband	1	4	10
7. Suicide Ideation	1	3	4
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	4	12	2

Cheltenham has been subject to frequent leadership changes in recent times - five superintendents in less than five years - and had a problematic facility culture throughout 2023. A seasoned DJS professional with experience in both the facility and headquarters level was appointed acting superintendent at the beginning of the second quarter of 2023 and was able

make significant strides in improving safety, security, staff training and accountability, and youth programming at Cheltenham in a short amount of time.

A new superintendent took over for the acting superintendent during the reporting period (in August 2023). Effective leadership will be vital to ensure that the promising reforms that improved facility culture that were implemented by the previous acting superintendent are not eroded but rather continue and are expanded upon.

Safety and Security

The average daily population at CYDC increased by 70% when comparing the third quarter of 2023 with the same period last year. Comparing the same two periods, fights among youth increased by 108%, staff use of physical restraints increased by 66%, and mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) substantially increased.

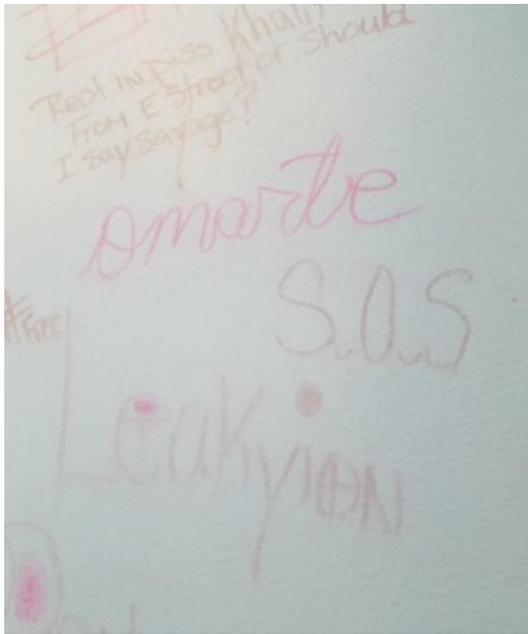
The Department has been working to ease staffing problems at Cheltenham and there has been an influx of new staff in recent months. Nonetheless, staffing availability-related issues have persisted at Cheltenham, and it remained an ongoing struggle to muster a robust enough staff-to-youth ratio to enable consistent and comprehensive programming for young people at the facility during the third quarter of 2023. At times, students could not attend school for the full school day due to lack of staff available to escort youth to and from school (Grievance 18383) and the facility had trouble finding a staff escort for the facility monitor (a long-standing requirement imposed by DJS Headquarters on JJMU monitors) to be able to conduct unannounced visits. Youth were locked in cells for hours during weekend days in the third quarter of 2023 because there were not enough staff in coverage to meet the minimum youth to staff ratio for youth movement to occur.

Recruitment and retention of staff should remain a top priority.

Staff Supervision and Facility Culture

Particular emphasis should be placed on basic safety and security protocols given the significant number of staff that are newly hired or have less than two years of experience in the field. Many incidents could be avoided or prevented with the institution of ongoing/continuous on-the-ground training and re-training emphasizing adherence to appropriate supervision protocols and enhanced cognizance of youth issues and group dynamics.

Facility surroundings are also important. During the reporting period, youth on one unit at Cheltenham were able to graffiti walls and doors inside their cells over time. Administration allowed the graffiti to remain for weeks before it was painted over by maintenance staff.



The availability of more constructive pastimes, as well as regular checks of living quarters and better supervision of youth could have prevented this situation from occurring.

In Incidents 175679 and 175701, staff did not ensure that youth doors were properly secured, and youth were able to leave their cells to fight other youth.

Several incidents of contraband in the third quarter of 2023 involved loose pills found in youth cells or elsewhere on youth living units. In Incident 175792, a pill was found in a youth's cell. The youth reported to mental health that a staffer gave him melatonin because he couldn't sleep and the sleep study he was undergoing was taking too long. In 175613, a plastic bag with pills and white powder was found on a unit. In Incident 175663, a pill was found on a unit floor after nursing staff left the unit following medication rounds. Nursing staff should ensure youth are taking (and not cheeking or hoarding) prescribed medications and should also insure accurate tracking of medication supplies.

Added structure through more constructive organized activities and better adherence to supervision protocols is needed and will help foster a more positive (and safer) facility culture at Cheltenham.

Basic Needs and Inventory

There were delays in providing youth inventory during the third quarter of 2023. Youth who requested thermals to wear because of cold temperatures on residential units had to wait over a month to receive them (Grievance 18449). Youth also reported that many incentive items said to be offered through the Department's behavior management system were unavailable.

Youth at Cheltenham who have hair styles such as lochs and braids frequently request stylist care for hair care maintenance. The DJS detention center in Baltimore city (BCJJC) offers a staff-led incentive which provides stylist services for youth maintaining positive behavior. Other facilities, including Cheltenham, should follow the lead of BCJJC and implement similar opportunities for youth to access stylist care.

GTL phones

Youth primarily use phone contact to keep in touch with loved ones while in DJS custody. Most phone calls are provided through Global Tel Link (GTL) phones, a prison telecommunications company that sells phone hardware and service to jails and prisons. GTL phones frequently break, and the phone connection is often of poor quality. In addition, the company is slow to respond to issues that arise. One unit at Cheltenham had broken phones for over a month before they were repaired. The Department should ensure that facilities have a reliable provider to provide phone services for youth as phone calls are the only mode of contact that some kids have with their families.

Lack of Maintenance of Youth Leisure/Recreation Items

Radios on residential units were provided during the third quarter of 2023, however a number of the radios were damaged or already broken by the end of the reporting period.

Cheltenham purchased exercise equipment for youth use in a facility weight room during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the room continues to be rarely utilized because of the presence of broken equipment or (most recently) issues with wiring.

The Department provides all youth in DJS custody MP3 players to help cope with boredom and monotony. At Cheltenham, only 20 songs are initially provided on the MP3 players issued to youth and there is no clear process for youth to request and receive additional songs on the players. The distribution and maintenance of the MP3 players is also flawed. Some youth report not receiving MP3 players upon entering the facility while others report not getting them returned to them after relinquishing them to staff to be charged. In addition, the headphones provided with the players are of poor quality and frequently break and are slow to get replaced. There should be a systematic process for distributing MP3 players, adding music to the players, and fixing any faulty equipment which prevents usage of the players.

Structured Programming

Activities for youth at Cheltenham during the third quarter included Fall season themed events, unit versus unit sports tournaments, motivational speakers, Christian-based religious programming, and STEM-related education programming that was taught by a community non-profit. After-school clubs are also regularly offered and well attended by interested students. These activities were welcomed but there needs to be more. Youth input provided through the youth advisory board should help guide future programming efforts.

Youth Detained at CYDC Awaiting Movement To a Treatment Program

Youth who are scheduled for admission to a committed placement facility can begin generalized treatment programming on the pending placement units at CYDC. This is a significantly positive development for young people incarcerated at CYDC who otherwise experience “dead time” while awaiting admission to the committed placement facility where they will be going. The pending placement unit at Cheltenham was recently decorated to provide a more therapeutic environment and youth received unique perks such as professional attire (blazers) to wear throughout the facility.

Youth on pending placement report that they would like more structured and therapeutic programming to be offered so that the special unit functions more like a treatment program and less like detention.

Education

Starting in mid-2022, an independent Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) Board focused solely on education in DJS facilities took over responsibility for education services inside DJS facilities with implementation and resource assistance from the Department.

Youth in the infirmary who are unable to move to school are not provided with adequate educational services. A youth in the infirmary requested help with schoolwork packets and in-person instruction. The principal stated that education did not have staff to go to the infirmary daily nor could they provide daily instruction on that unit (Grievance 18414). Youth placed on the quarantine unit also lack in-person instruction.

The facility also fails to prioritize getting all kids to school on a consistent basis and students are often late to school or do not attend school because of staffing availability issues and also when one or two youth on a living unit refuse school. More efforts should be made to foster student engagement and ensure proper staffing so that students can receive classroom instruction for the full school day.

There are several teacher and school office administration vacancies at CYDC including openings for a math, social studies, English Language Learner (ELL), and resource teacher and for a guidance counselor.

Girls and Young Women Detained at Cheltenham

Detained girls, many of whom have extensive mental health and trauma-related needs, were relegated to a single living unit at the facility during the third quarter of 2023. Infirmary stays were off-limits to girls and young women at CYDC despite the presence of girls with high medical needs including a pregnant girl nearing the end of her third trimester of pregnancy. In addition, and also in contrast with the boys at Cheltenham, girls did not have access to a separate pending placement living area which allows adjudicated youth awaiting an opening in a placement facility to be housed together and to begin treatment orientation and to complete some of the generalized aspects of treatment planning.

When girls and young women in the custody of the Department had their own dedicated detention facility (Noyes in Rockville), they received more individualized care and services and had more dedicated space to meet their needs. The results flowing from this were reflected in positive behavioral and academic outcomes.

In October 2023, the Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC) in Hagerstown, Maryland, was converted to an all-girls detention center and all detained girls in DJS custody were transferred there. While the facility is far from most girls' communities and families and many girls were concerned about maintaining family contact while housed at WMCC, the extra space and dedicated staff available to the girls at WMCC provides a greater opportunity to address the unique medical, reproductive health, mental health, and trauma-related needs of girls in the juvenile justice system.

Charles H. Hickey, Jr., School

The Charles H. Hickey, Jr., School (Hickey) in Baltimore County is a hardware secure (locked and fenced) detention center for boys. Hickey is owned and operated by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) and has a DJS-rated housing capacity of 72 youth. Black youth represented 85% and Hispanic/Latino youth represented 5% of the total number of young people entering the Hickey facility during the third quarter of 2023.

Hickey – Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2021	Q3 2022	Q3 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	35	50	59
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	25	42	51
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	1	0	0
3. Physical Restraint	25	38	59
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	3	6	4
5. Seclusion	1	13	12
6. Contraband	4	2	8
7. Suicide Ideation	1	1	4
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	1	0

The average daily population of youth in Hickey increased by 18% when comparing the third quarter of 2023 with the same time in 2022.

Continuing the comparison between the third quarter of 2023 with the same time last year:

- Incidents involving youth on youth fights and assaults increased by 21% and the use of physical restraints of youth by staff increased by 55%.
- The number of instances involving contraband also rose.

Mental Health Services for Youth with Issues of Aggression

Mental health staff should provide more individualized treatment plans for kids involved in multiple incidents of aggression, and these youth should be seen more often by mental health professionals for support.

Recreation and Activities

The Hickey administration and staff continue to make special efforts to create and offer youth meaningful activities and outlets for positive engagement. Activities during the quarter included: staff versus youth volleyball and basketball games, birthday celebrations for youth, movie nights, painting and snacks nights, ice cream socials, community garden, motivational speakers, and baby showers for parents of young kids. There is also a therapy dog on-site and youth were observed walking the dog regularly throughout the third quarter of 2023.

Education

The school at Hickey and inside all DJS-operated detention and committed placement centers is staffed and supervised by the Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) superintendent. Education services are overseen by the superintendent and an independent school board with administrative coordination and assistance provided by DJS. Two youth earned high school diplomas at Hickey during the third quarter of 2023.

There are several teacher and school office administration vacancies at Hickey including for a math, social studies, and resource teacher and for a guidance counselor.

Shelter Care

There is a shelter care program for boys and girls on the grounds outside the fence of the Hickey hardware secure (maximum security) detention component. The program started in 2022 and is overseen by DJS administrators from the Hickey detention center. Direct-care staff from Hickey supervise the youth in shelter care, and the staff have positive relationships with the youth at the shelter.

The shelter program provides temporary housing and meals for youth people but there is a paucity of services and activities provided to youth.

The shelter also lacks a full-service kitchen, and youth receive their meals from the kitchen inside the detention center. Youth are provided snacks in addition to regular meals.

The shelter needs an on-site medical technician or med-certified staff to distribute youth medications.

Shelter residents have no offsite and limited onsite activities and lack structured recreation services and recreation equipment. Youth are often unoccupied and bored during their stay. The shelter kids need more in-house pastimes and outings opportunities with access to local community events to help keep them constructively occupied.

The phone call allowance for youth at the shelter is the same as that for detained youth at Hickey and residents must use Global Tel Link⁹ phones installed at the shelter to make calls. There should be open phone access at the shelter, and phone services should not be provided through a corrections-related provider with all calls recorded.

⁹ Global Tel Link (GTL) is a prison telecommunications company that provides phone services to prisons and jails.
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Thomas J.S. Waxter Children's Center

The Thomas J.S. Waxter Children's Center (Waxter) in Laurel (Anne Arundel County) was a hardware secure (locked and fenced) detention center for girls. Waxter was operated by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) and had a DJS-rated housing capacity of 32 girls.

The Waxter facility was aged, cramped and in disrepair and so the Department refurbished the Noyes secure detention center in Montgomery County to serve as an all-girls detention facility. Noyes was also an old facility, but the physical plant was in slightly better condition in some respects than the wholly decrepit Waxter center. Waxter was closed and the girls housed there were transferred to the Noyes facility in March of 2022.

In April of 2022, an air conditioner handler unit caught fire at the Noyes facility and the girls were relocated to a unit at the DJS detention center for boys located in Cheltenham, Prince George's County (the Cheltenham Youth Detention Center/CYDC), until repairs could be made to the Noyes AC unit. In June of 2022, the girls were transported back to the Noyes facility in Rockville.

In mid-October of 2022, the Noyes facility for girls was closed once again and detained girls awaiting adjudication and multiple staff from Noyes were once again transferred to the detention center for boys in Cheltenham (CYDC), this time as part of a belated measure to bolster critically low staffing levels at the Cheltenham facility.

In October of 2023, the Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC) in Hagerstown, Maryland, was converted to an all-girls detention center and all detained girls in DJS custody were transferred there. While the facility is far from most of the incarcerated girls' communities and families and while many girls were concerned about maintaining family contact when housed at WMCC, the extra space and dedicated staff available to the girls at WMCC provides a greater opportunity to address the unique medical, reproductive health, mental health, and trauma-related needs of girls in the juvenile justice system.

Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center

The Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center (Noyes), located in Montgomery County, is a Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) owned and operated maximum security detention center for girls with a DJS-rated population capacity of 29. Noyes is located in the metro region near Washington, DC and is accessible by public transportation. Noyes was temporarily closed in early December 2021 and boys and girls housed at Noyes were moved to other DJS detention centers while the Department arranged the conversion of Noyes to an all-girls detention center. After the conversion, girls housed at the aged and deteriorating Waxter detention center in Laurel were moved to Noyes in March of 2022. Due to both facility conditions and staffing issues, detained girls were displaced from Noyes several times during 2022. From October of 2022 to October of 2023, most of the securely detained girls in the state were being held in the single 12-cell unit at Cheltenham Youth Detention Center.

In October 2023, the Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC) in Hagerstown, Maryland, was converted to an all-girls detention center and all detained girls in DJS custody were transferred there. While the facility is far from most girls' communities and families and while many girls were concerned about maintaining family contact when housed at WMCC, the extra space and dedicated staff available to the girls at WMCC provide a greater opportunity to address the unique medical, reproductive health, mental health, and trauma-related needs of girls in the juvenile justice system.

Lower Eastern Shore Children’s Center

The Lower Eastern Shore Children’s Center (LESCC) is a hardware secure detention center located in Salisbury, Maryland. LESCC is owned and operated by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) and has a DJS-rated housing capacity of 24 youth. Black youth represented 73% and Hispanic/Latino youth represented 7% of the total number of young people entering LESCC during the second quarter of 2023.

LESCC – Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2021	Q3 2022	Q3 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	9	15	21
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	3	13	36
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	0	6	2
3. Physical Restraint	18	47	49
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	0	1	0
5. Seclusion	1	6	2
6. Contraband	2	3	3
7. Suicide Ideation	5	3	3
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	0	0

The average daily youth population at LESCC increased by 40% and incidents involving youth on youth aggression nearly tripled when comparing the third quarter of 2023 with the same time last year. Physical restraints of youth by staff went up slightly (47 to 49) when comparing the two time periods.

Administrators and staff at LESCC have a long-standing practice of minimizing the use of handcuffs and/or shackles on youth in recognition of the potentially traumatizing effects these control tactics can have on kids. Handcuffs and/or shackles were not used on children inside the facility during the third quarter of 2023.

Security protocols and seclusion policy were breached during a group disturbance in the third quarter of 2023. One unit was inside a classroom during school hours when a teacher exited the classroom and left the door unsecured. Staff in master control did not notice that the door was left ajar and opened the door to another living unit. Youth ran out of the classroom and over toward youth from the other living unit and a group fight ensued. Staffers spent 15 minutes trying to separate the youths and restore order (Incident 175640).

Youth involved in the melee were placed on seclusion and remained on seclusion for approximately three hours, even though reported observations of the youth while they were locked in their cells noted youth were no longer a threat to themselves or others. DJS seclusion policy stipulates that seclusion cannot be used as punishment and that youth should only be kept in seclusion if they pose an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others. This incident was reviewed, and the details utilized by facility management for retraining and accountability purposes.

Western Maryland Children’s Center

Western Maryland Children’s Center (WMCC), located in Washington County, is a 24-bed maximum security detention center for youth owned and operated by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department). Black youth represented 71% and Hispanic/Latino youth represented 10% of the total number of young people entering WMCC during the third quarter of 2023.

WMCC – Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2021	Q3 2022	Q3 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	9	15	17
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	6	11	15
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	1	4	1
3. Physical Restraint	10	28	30
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	1	9	8
5. Seclusion	2	4	3
6. Contraband	0	0	1
7. Suicide Ideation	0	3	2
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	0	1

The average daily population at WMCC increased slightly when comparing the third quarter of 2023 with the same time last year. The number of incidents involving youth fighting other youth and the utilization of physical restraint also increased.

In October of 2023, WMCC was converted to an all-girls detention center and all detained girls in DJS custody were transferred there while boys at the facility were transferred to other DJS detention centers throughout the state. While the facility is far from most girls’ communities and families and many girls were concerned about maintaining family contact while housed at

WMCC, the extra space and dedicated staff available to the girls at WMCC provide a greater opportunity to address the unique medical, reproductive health, mental health, and trauma-related needs of girls in the juvenile justice system.

Youth reported wanting more programming options during after-school hours and on weekends, including after-school clubs during the third quarter of 2023. Efforts should be made to offer a variety of gender-responsive programming for girls on a consistent basis. A long-standing vacancy for a recreation specialist should be filled as soon as possible as this could help to fill the need for more structured programming.

The Department should ensure adequate mental health resources for girls, most of whom have more extensive mental health and trauma-related needs than boys. A recent vacancy for a mental health therapist at WMCC should be filled without delay.

The Department has arranged for some cable television availability at WMCC and other DJS-operated facilities, however technical issues have stymied installations at WMCC and at some other DJS sites. The issues should be resolved as soon as possible.

COMMITTED PLACEMENT CENTERS

Victor Cullen Center

The Victor Cullen Center (Cullen), in Frederick County, is a hardware secure (locked and fenced) committed placement center owned and operated by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department). The DJS-rated housing capacity is 26 youth. Black youth represented 79% and Hispanic/Latino youth represented 5% of the total number of young people entering the Cullen facility during the third quarter of 2023.

Victor Cullen – Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2021	Q3 2022	Q3 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	12	17	23
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	7	13	16
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	1	1	6
3. Physical Restraint	9	19	28
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	5	3	11
5. Seclusion	0	0	5
6. Contraband	0	1	8
7. Suicide Ideation	1	0	2
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	1	0	2

The average daily population at Cullen increased by 35% when comparing the third quarter of this year with the same time in 2022. Further comparison of the same two time periods shows that the number of youth fights increased by 23%, seclusions went from zero instances in the third quarter of 2022 to five instances in the third quarter of 2023, staff usage of physical restraints increased by 47% and staff use of mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) on youth inside the facility increased very substantially.

Staffing and Services Issues

There have been ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining mental health professionals and case management staff to work at the remotely located Cullen facility.

Recreational staff are not actively engaged in planning and running structured programming for kids.

There continued to be problems with some of the most basic of services during the reporting period, for example, clothing and hygiene inventory was often late and barbering services were not available for weeks at a time.

Music to listen to through individual MP3 players, movies, and video games – the main ways that youth pass time – are not updated or frequently accessible and Spanish speaking students are not provided with Spanish language music. The facility pays for Netflix and other streaming services, however streaming channels are not available on residential unit televisions due to longstanding IT issues that have yet to be resolved.

Off-grounds activities are not a regular part of programming, even for youth who have reached higher levels of the program, although some high school graduates were able to work off-site through an employment program implemented by the new DJS administration during the third quarter of 2023.

GTL Phone Issues

Youth primarily use phone contact to keep in touch with loved ones while in DJS custody. Most phone calls are provided through Global Tel Link (GTL) phones, a telecommunications company that sells phone hardware and service to jails and prisons. GTL phones frequently malfunction or break, and the phone connection is often of poor quality. In addition, the company is slow to respond to issues that arise. One unit at Cullen experienced ongoing issues with their GTL phones and reported that they were not being provided make-up minutes missed due to poor connections and dropped calls. The Department should ensure that facilities have a reliable provider to provide phone services to kids as that is the primary mode of contact that kids have with their families.

Youth with Special Medical Needs

Cullen staff had trouble arranging consistent transportation to bring a youth who uses a wheelchair to physical therapy appointments. The youth also had a home pass to attend his grandmother's funeral, but transportation did not arrive to the facility in time for him to attend the services.

Medical staff were able to find an independent living facility that accepts wheelchair users. The young person is scheduled to be transferred to the facility upon his release from Cullen.

Education

The Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) is responsible for education services at all DJS secure detention and committed placement facilities, including the Victor Cullen Center.

There were vacancies for a math, resource, and career and technical education (CTE) teacher and a guidance counselor during the reporting period.

Victor Cullen Center Program for Girls and Young Women

There were four girls placed at Cullen during the third quarter of 2023.

Girls with significant mental and behavioral health needs and complex and difficult family dynamics often get dumped in maximum security correctional facilities such as Cullen where their conditions often worsen. Even with the small number of girls under their care, Cullen lacks a comprehensive, therapeutic approach and is not equipped with staff with the appropriate clinical expertise and specialized training to provide individualized and effective treatment services for high needs kids. Two girls placed at Cullen during the quarter had extensive family-related and behavioral health needs and faced difficulties in adhering to the one-size-fits-all and compliance-oriented program requirements. Cullen struggled to help these two girls and to manage the group dynamics arising from the two girls being placed at the facility.

One of the girls with specialized needs was ejected from Cullen and placed in detention for a month to help her “get stabilized”. She was returned to Cullen for two months and then released with wrap around services in the community. The other girl with specialized needs has been incarcerated since the age of 13 and spent seven months in detention before she was transferred to Cullen in April of 2023. She spent over five months at Cullen before the administration at the facility decided it could not deal with her issues and ejected her. She was sent back to detention where she remains at time of writing (November of 2023).

A third girl at Cullen who was reserved and compliant with facility rules reported to her community case manager that she felt bullied by one of the other two girls at Cullen at the time who would constantly taunt and tease her (Incident 176037). The disruptive dynamics between her and the two high needs girls overwhelmed her coping abilities on one occasion, and during a class period she repeatedly banged her head against a door in frustration (Incident 175489). (It should be noted that this girl previously spent 6 months in detention without any incidents involving self-injurious behavior.) During her mental health debriefing, she requested an increase in her anti-depressant medication due to her worsening symptoms of depression. Incarceration often worsens pre-existing mental health conditions in addition to leading to other negative short-

and long-term outcomes for kids.¹⁰ She, along with a fourth compliant young woman who earned her high school diploma during her time at Cullen, were able to complete the program in November of 2023 and she was subsequently released.

At time of writing (November 28, 2023), there are no girls placed at Victor Cullen.

The harms and ineffectiveness of the correctional approach and of incarceration in dealing with the root causes of problematic youth behavior are well documented.¹¹ In contrast, community-based interventions have been shown to work well for the “vast majority”¹² of adjudicated youth in part because these programs “serve youth in their communities with stakeholders who come from those communities, adopt a positive youth development frame, and prioritize participation from family members.”¹³

The Department should work to build capacity in local communities so that they can provide services to families and children with the eventual goal of ending the incarceration of the small number of girls in the deep end of Maryland’s juvenile justice system. Some local jurisdictions and states have been successful in ending the incarceration of girls and can serve as a model.¹⁴

¹⁰ Mendel, Richard (March 2023), “Why Incarceration Fails: An Updated Review of the Evidence”, The Sentencing Project, available at: <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/why-youth-incarceration-fails-an-updated-review-of-the-evidence/>

¹¹ Campaign for Youth Justice, “If Not the Adult System, Then Where? Alternatives to Adult Incarceration for Youth Certified Adults”, page 11, available at: https://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/images/ALT_INCARCERATION_FINAL.pdf

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Vera’s Ending Girls Incarceration Initiative, available at: <https://www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration/reducing-incarceration/reducing-jail-and-prison-population/ending-girls-incarceration-initiative>

Garrett Children’s Center (formerly Savage Mountain Youth Center)

The Garrett Children’s Center (GCC/Garrett) is a Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) owned and operated hardware secure (locked and fenced) committed placement center for boys with a DJS-rated capacity of 24. The facility is in rural Garrett County in western Maryland.

There were no youth placed at GCC during the reporting period, however, education staff report to the facility and broadcast virtual classes to various other DJS facilities to mitigate teacher shortages. Security staff and some administrators also report to the facility. Vacancies for superintendent and assistant superintendent positions at GCC were filled toward the end of 2022. At time of writing (November 2023), the superintendent and assistant superintendent from the Garrett facility are assigned to the Victor Cullen Center to bolster staffing.

The state of Maryland spent close to \$6 million dollars to add fencing, locks, and other security apparatus to convert the remotely located staff secure Savage Mountain Youth Center into a more prison-like hardware secure facility and renamed it Garrett Children’s Center. Garrett Children’s Center was fully operational for two years (from December of 2018 to December of 2020) before it closed to youth in 2021, following a COVID-19 outbreak at the facility.

The significant fiscal and human resources spent on keeping the facility open could be more effectively spent on further increasing the availability of community-based programming for young people. As researchers on juvenile justice issues have recognized, “youth incarceration has several negative outcomes, including association with more delinquent peers and increased criminal behavior and recidivism. Closing underutilized juvenile correctional facilities and reinvesting the savings into evidence-based programs and services keeps young people out of the system, in school, and connected to their families.”¹⁵

DJS should not reopen Garrett Children’s Center as a residential placement for youth as continuing to invest in remote congregate care facilities constitutes a flawed approach to youth justice and experts in the field have concluded that “consistently brutal conditions, stark racial disparities, dismal outcomes, and high costs have characterized youth prisons since their birth.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), OJJDP Priorities, available at [OJJDP Priorities | Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention \(ojp.gov\)](https://www.ojjdp.gov/priorities)

¹⁶ Schiraldi, Vincent (June 2020), Can We Eliminate the Youth Prison? And What Should We Replace it With?, Executive Session of the Future of Justice Policy, The Square One Project, available at [Can We Eliminate the Youth Prison? \(And What Should We Replace It With\)? | By Vincent Schiraldi \(June 2020\) - Square One Project \(squareonejustice.org\)](https://squareonejustice.org/)

Youth Centers x2

The youth centers, located in remote western Maryland, consist of two separate staff secure (not fenced and locked) facilities for boys. Both centers are owned and operated by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department). The facilities are Green Ridge (30-youth capacity) and Backbone Mountain (28-youth capacity). Youth of color continue to constitute the majority of incarcerated young people in Maryland’s juvenile justice system. Black youth represented 78% and Hispanic/Latino youth represented 10% of the total number of young people entering the two centers during the third quarter of 2023.

Combined Youth Centers (x2) – Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2021	Q3 2022	Q3 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	33	33	54
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	7	13	36
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	2	8	12
3. Physical Restraint	62	53	159
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	9	16	19
5. Seclusion	0	0	1
6. Contraband	4	7	13
7. Suicide Ideation	1	11	8
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	1	0	1

The average daily population at the youth centers increased by 64% when comparing the third quarter of this year with the same time in 2022. Further comparison of the same two time periods shows that fights involving youth increased by 177% and use of handcuffs and/or shackles on young people increased by 19%.

As is also evident from the data contained in the table above, there was an alarming increase in staff use of physical restraints on young people at the youth centers during the second quarter, in comparison to the same time last year.

A substantial majority of incidents involving the physical restraints during the reporting period took place at the Green Ridge Youth Center - 98 instances versus 61 at the Backbone Mountain facility. A similar pattern held for the usage of mechanical restraints on youth – 16 instances at Green Ridge versus 3 at Backbone. In regard to reports involving suicide ideation, there were eight at the Green Ridge facility and none at Backbone Mountain.

The young people incarcerated at Green Ridge report that both direct care and some school staff need training in building rapport and consistency with youth instead of engaging in power struggles with youth and constantly threatening to take behavior management program points away for minor things. Youth maintain that such staff behavior triggers them and escalates minor situations into stand offs and incidents involving physical restraints.

Young people in DJS placement often report that they feel better cared for and receive more supports in the detention environment and request to “do their time” in detention rather than DJS placement centers. Several young people voiced this preference to monitors during a visit to Green Ridge.

The Department should increase the number of supervisory positions at Green Ridge (which has less management positions than Backbone Mountain Youth Center) and fill these positions with experienced professionals who can provide mentorship, guidance, and training to new direct-care staff to help foster healthier and more positive relationships between youth and staff.

Physical Plant Issues at Green Ridge

Youth had concerns about the physical plant conditions at Green Ridge including trouble sleeping due to an infestation of bugs in youth sleeping quarters (including in their bedding) and unsanitary and filthy conditions in the youth bathroom.



GTL Phone Issues

Youth primarily use phone contact to keep in touch with loved ones while in DJS custody. Most phone calls are provided through Global Tel Link (GTL) phones, a telecommunications company that sells phone hardware and services to jails and prisons. GTL phones frequently

malfunction or break and the phone connection is often of poor quality. In addition, the company is slow to respond to issues that arise. In Grievance 18420 multiple youth at Green Ridge complained about the GTL phones not working. Phone contact is especially vital for youth stuck in placement centers far from home as the Department has stopped providing case management-supervised video calls for all youth in DJS custody. The Department should ensure that facilities have a reliable provider to provide phone services to kids as that is the primary mode of contact that kids have with their families.

Mental Health Staffing

Recruiting and retaining mental health professionals are ongoing problems within DJS facilities, and there are vacancies for clinicians at both Backbone and Green Ridge youth centers. Youth in placement are reliant on clinician availability to receive required treatment hours to complete the program. Their progress is delayed when there are not enough treatment staff to meet identified clinical needs. Youth also report needing clinical support during the school day but have not been allowed to access mental health services during school time.

Barbering Services

Providing consistent barbering services at the remotely located DJS placement centers is a continuing challenge, and young people often must wait weeks to over a month for a haircut.

Certification and Employment Programs

Young people in placement consistently request the opportunity to earn trade certifications in high demand vocational and technical areas and express a strong desire to gain work experience while in placement. A recently instituted off-site work program for high school graduates is a much needed first step in meeting these needs. Some eligible high school graduate students at Backbone also take community college courses during the Garrett Community College academic year – youth participants in previous months have said they found a welding course to be particularly useful and enjoyable. These type of opportunities should be expanded and should be consistently available for all interested students.

Silver Oak Academy

Silver Oak Academy (SOA/Silver Oak), located in Carroll County, is a privately-operated staff secure (not locked and fenced) committed placement center licensed by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) to house up to 96 boys.

Due to concerns about staff supervision issues, youth safety, and problems within the education department at Silver Oak, all residential youth placed through DJS were removed from the program in May of 2022 and new admissions to the program through DJS have been indefinitely halted.

SMALLER FACILITY UPDATES

SMALLER FACILITY UPDATES

Morning Star Youth Academy

Morning Star Youth Academy (Morning Star) is a staff secure (not locked or fenced) committed placement center on Maryland's eastern shore. The facility is operated by VisionQuest, Inc., and is licensed by DJS to house up to 24 youth.

Morning Star utilizes a trauma-informed approach called the Sanctuary model. Therapeutic and treatment services at the facility are provided onsite and supplemented by clinicians from community mental health organizations.

Youth at Morning Star participate in on- and off-site recreational activities including biking, running, and yoga and mindfulness. There is an outdoor pool on the campus which is open during summer months and an equine therapy program which primarily involves taking care of horses on campus.

Young people at Morning Star volunteer in surrounding local communities and partake in various activities, including helping children with their schoolwork and packing meals for a local charitable organization. Some youth from Morning Star also work at local businesses.

Staff supervision remains an issue of concern at Morning Star. After multiple youth tested positive for cannabis (Incident 176174), a search of living units revealed several items of contraband including a vape pen (Incidents 176260, 176262). In Incident 176027, a youth was able to take a staff member's keys and steal her car during an AWOL attempt. Routine searches, increased supervision of youth movement, and enhanced key control measures should be implemented to create a safer facility environment.

One Love Group Home

One Love Group Home (One Love) is an 8-bed group home in Baltimore City operated by Building Communities Today for Tomorrow, Inc. The home is licensed by and receives referrals from the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) and began receiving referrals to house youth involved with the Maryland Department of Human Resources during the second quarter of 2022.

One Love partners with community-based organizations to provide therapy, education, employment, and enrichment opportunities for young people while they reside in the home-like environment offered by the small community-based facility. Students from One Love are enrolled in local schools and work toward achieving a high school diploma. Family contact and family involvement in youth progress is encouraged by facility administrators.

Due to the nature of the program, older youth who are interested in and motivated to develop skills for independent living are the best candidates for successful program completion. Young people who need enhanced therapeutic support and intensive services and/or highly structured routines and environments may face difficulties at One Love. The Department should align youth referrals to One Love with the level of care and services available at the home.

At time of writing (November 2023), there is one youth placed at One Love through DJS. The youth has a high school diploma and is working at a nearby restaurant to save money for independent living and for community college.

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES - RESPONSE



**DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES
RESPONSE TO JJMU 2023 THIRD QUARTER REPORT**

DJS appreciates the opportunity to respond to the thoughtful feedback shared in JJMU’s Third Quarter FY 23 Report (“the Report”).

The Department of Juvenile Services (“DJS” or “the Department”) does not disagree with the substance of the Report. In January 2024, we will convene DJS Residential Care and JSEP staff, as well as DJS support staff, to carefully examine and address the Report and recommendations.

Due to the substantial agreement with your findings, rather than a point-by-point response, consistent with our recent practice DJS is providing general comments about the Report, then highlighting a few achievements relative to residential services over the past year that warrant mentioning, followed by some specific plans to improve conditions for youth in custody that are germane to JJMU’s recommendations in the Report.

Race and Maryland’s Juvenile Justice System

The Report rightly begins with a discussion of the stark racial disparities in Maryland’s juvenile justice system. DJS entirely agrees with this prioritization in your report and look forward to working with the Maryland Equitable Justice Collaborative established in October by Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown and State Public Defender Natasha Dartigue to address racial disparities in Maryland’s adult and juvenile justice systems. Data from the Department’s upcoming Data Resource Guide, which will become available in January, show that the racial disparities in Maryland’s juvenile justice system are going from bad to worse:

- The percent of youth in pre-disposition detention who are youth of color has increased from 84.2% in FY14 to 90.2% in FY23
- The percentage of commitments to DJS that are youth of color increased from 75.7% in FY14 to 87.1% in FY23
- 92.5% of youth in detention in DJS facilities who were being tried as adults in FY23 were youth of color.

Research presented to the Maryland Juvenile Justice Reform Council found that 87% of youth automatically charged as adults eventually have their cases either dismissed or waived back to the youth justice system or are sentenced by the courts to time served. They are confined nearly twice as long in detention waiting for their adult cases to be resolved, time that amounts to “dead time” as it does not count against time they may have to spend in a rehabilitative setting after they are adjudicated and placed. As JJMU rightly points out in its report, much of this time is spent in DJS juvenile detention facilities, places that were not designed to house young people for more than a few weeks. The Department estimates that the cost to house these youth being tried as adults exceeds \$13 million annually, money that could be spent on meaningful community programming. Resolving the issue of having so many young people – overwhelmingly youth of color – spending so much time waiting to be ultimately returned to the juvenile system (or having their cases dismissed outright) at such a high cost must, as JJMU’s report suggests, be a high priority.

Achievements in Residential Programming during 2023

- Appointed Antonia Reason, Deputy Secretary for Residential Services and David Domenici, Director of Education and Senior Advisor to the Secretary;
- Brought on new leadership at three of DJS’ largest secure facilities (Superintendents Daniel McCoy at BCJJC; Victor Maldonado at Victor Cullen; and Christian Munoz at Cheltenham);
- Consolidated girls in custody from several facilities to a unified girls facility at the Western Maryland Children’s Center;
- Launched the Comprehensive Treatment Model (CTM) providing Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) and Trauma Informed Therapy, both evidence based practices, to youth in residential treatment facilities;
- Restarted off grounds activities for youth. Youth in DJS treatment facilities have participated in the following activities this year:
 - Provided services to the surrounding communities including:

- Building a deck on a non-profit day care center with Habitat for Humanity
 - Planting trees in Carroll Park,
 - Took youth hiking, rock climbing, horseback riding, and canoeing as rewards for consistently good performance in residential facilities
 - Visited the Naval Academy
 - Attended plays
 - Educational trips to Maryland State Parks and the Thurmont Zoo
- Launched pending placement units in BCJJC and CYDC. In addition to turning “dead time” into productive time for youth pending placement, this and several other focused efforts have helped to reduce the number of youth pending placement from over 60 this summer to mid-40s now, numbers that would be even lower but for the fact that several facilities are in COVID-19 quarantine presently;
- Started afterschool activities in residential facilities;
- From 1/3/23 to 12/14/23 reduced the frontline vacancy rate from 18% to 8.5%;
- Launched YOLO (Youth Opportunities of Learning Occupations) - Youth who have completed high school and are still in our residential facilities are provided employment opportunities, with work locations at Gambrills State Park, Cunningham Falls State Park, and Albert Powell Trout Hatchery;
- Reinstated CHAMPS intramurals, providing youth with opportunities to travel to other facilities to compete on facility athletic teams such as softball, volleyball, track and field, basketball, bowling, pickle ball and soccer, as well as in academic and public speaking competitions;
- Opened “Freedom Reads” library at BCJJC;
- Awarded a \$750K grant from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to support reentry efforts for youth going back to the community;
- Brought on several staff to drive three innovation teams that will reimagine our facilities - one focused on detention, one on commitment, and one on girls. The innovation teams will receive input from national and local experts, and will involve collaborative work by a range of DJS staff and youth to gradually create model facilities and improve overall facility conditions and culture. The teams will launch in early 2024.

Specific Responses to JJMU Recommendations

As noted above, early in 2024, the Department will further review JJMU's 3rd Quarter report and key recommendations to integrate into DJS's work plans. To start, DJS is beginning work to implement the following non-exhaustive list of recommendations:

- Review the hardware and carrier for phone service in residential facilities to discern which should be changed and which can continue;
- Switch from the correctional provider to a standard phone system that will no longer record youth calls in the Hickey Shelter;
- Permit JJMU staff to tour facilities unescorted;
- Increase the number of phone calls youth can make (NB: youth in DJS custody are not charged for phone calls);
- Partner with community organizations to provide mentorship and support to youth while incarcerated with the goal of continuing these positive relationships upon release; and
- Ask youth and their families which members they define as part of their family and allow vetted extended family members to be placed on a child's call and visitation list for regular visits. (NB: DJS policy already provides that youth can have calls with a "Significant Person", defined as "an individual identified by the youth who plays a supportive role in the youth's life. This could include a coach, mentor, teacher, or an additional family member, etc.". DJS will work to implement this policy consistently at all facilities.

Please accept this as the Department's response to your Third Quarter monitoring report and do not hesitate to contact Marc Schindler, Assistant Secretary & Chief of Staff, if you have any questions.

JUVENILE SERVICES EDUCATION PROGRAM – RESPONSE

Juvenile Services Education Program Response

The Effect of Vacancies on the Instructional Program

Education vacancies continue to challenge the JSEP's goal of providing a rigorous, engaging, and relevant education to all youth detained in DJS facilities. The JSEP has mitigated the effects on students through its use of virtual learning provided by teachers at Garrett Children's Center (GCC). Students involved in virtual learning are taught by teachers licensed in their subject areas from GCC with learning being facilitated by teachers in the classrooms with the students. In most cases, these are special education teachers who can also provide guidance to all students along with needed support to our large population of special education students. This model is similar to the co-teaching model promoted in all JSEP schools, with the difference being that one teacher is remote. JSEP students are able to ask questions and interact with the virtual teacher.

The JSEP is working with DJS to find innovative ways to recruit more high-quality teachers. The JSEP has planned two large education job fairs for the week of March 11th. They will be held at Victor Cullen Center (VCC) and Charles H. Hickey School. The hope is the timing and locations of these events will bring in many education staff to the places with the highest vacancy rates. The JSEP is also in conversation with colleges and universities with teacher education programs and has started the process of entering into MOUs with them. JSEP will have its first intern in school counseling from Frostburg University in the spring semester. The JSEP board, superintendent, and DJS are also exploring alternative school year calendars and local pay parity as ways to increase potential teachers' interest in working for JSEP. The JSEP is looking into the possibility of hiring a legislative consultant to help write and push through the legislation that would be necessary to make these changes.

All JSEP students are entitled to ongoing education while detained in a DJS school. Staff shortages, while challenging, are not a reason for a child to miss out on education when in quarantine or in an infirmary unit. The JSEP leadership has asked each JSEP school to develop a written plan that describes their procedures to provide educational programming and related services to students who are in quarantine or the infirmary. Each school must have their plan in place and on file at headquarters and these procedures will be updated over time on an as-needed basis.

Career and Technical Education Offerings

The JSEP CTE coordinator is committed to continuing to bring additional industry certifications that will serve JSEP students well when looking for meaningful employment once they are released. The JSEP has invested in a few Virtual Reality (VR) headsets that allow students to explore many aspects of automotive maintenance and repairs. These are currently being used at VCC. With the imminent release of the Perkins funds, the JSEP plans to purchase TRANFR VR headset to deploy across all schools. These allow career exploration and training in over 400 different industries.

Additionally, the JSEP CTE programs at Green Ridge Youth Center (GRYC), Victor Cullen Center (VCC), and Backbone Mountain Youth Center (BMYC) will house additional CTE programming. CTE at GRYC includes Construction Trades, featuring two courses: Introduction to Construction and Foundational Topics in the Construction Trades. BMYC offers its students C-Tech, a two-course sequence (CPS I and CPS II). VCC offers automotive training and certification through VR headsets.

JSEP CTE students have the opportunity to earn several industry certifications. These certifications include:

- OSHA-10
- OSHA-30
- ServeSafe
- Flagger
- CPR/First Aid
- Microsoft Office
- Google
- Others based on student interest and regional workforce needs.

Positive Student Interaction

Building positive relationships based on respect and trust are vital for a good educational environment. The JSEP leadership team is putting in place professional development sessions to ensure all education staff understand and have the tools to establish these types of relationships in their classrooms.