



OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL OMBUDSMAN  
JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT

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**STATE OF MARYLAND**

**2024 THIRD QUARTER REPORT**

## **The Maryland Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU)**

The Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit (JJMU) 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 note 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, which 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 is responsible for education services in DJS facilities, 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 2024 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 2024 reports.

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services' response and a response from the Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) are included, as indicated on the contents page.

The JJMU 2024 Third Quarter Report compendium was produced by Margi Joshi, Nick Moroney and Marvin Stone.

We respectfully submit this report to the Governor, members of the Maryland General Assembly, the Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Services, and the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices, as required under Maryland law.



OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL OMBUDSMAN  
JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT  
STATE OF MARYLAND

December 2024

The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor  
State of Maryland

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

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

The Honorable Vincent Schiraldi, Secretary  
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services

The Honorable Andre Davis, Chairperson  
Maryland Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices

Dear Governor Moore, Senate President Ferguson, Speaker of the House Jones, Secretary Schiraldi, and Chair Davis,

This report summarizes conditions in detention and placement facilities operated by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) during the third quarter of 2024.

The number of youth automatically charged as adults as a proportion of the DJS detention center population is continuing to increase and is exponentially higher than it was just a few years ago. We have reached the point where the majority of youth held in the larger DJS facilities are facing “adult charges”. This poses great challenges for Department employees as they strive to serve young people held for months and sometimes over a year awaiting a decision from the criminal courts in contrast to the appropriately shorter timelines governing the juvenile bench.

Maryland is an outlier compared to the rest of the nation in that the State charges so many young people as adults for so many different offenses and the youth concerned are then left incarcerated in high security juvenile or adult detention facilities for untoward amounts of time

without having their day in court where a judge or magistrate can assess the circumstances and legitimacy of the charges being pressed against them. The youth who end up prosecuted as adults are overwhelmingly young people of color and young people from under-resourced communities, (as indeed are the vast majority of youth charged as juveniles and held in DJS-operated placement and detention facilities).

Family engagement and contact with positive influences as well as legal counsel are essential to the young people at all DJS detention and placement facilities. While DJS leadership encourages youth contact with constructive and supportive influences (mentors and concerned extended family members), some facility-based and community-based case managers are not in agreement with this approach and do not proactively help youth to stay in touch with supportive influences beyond immediate family members.

A further impediment to family engagement for the high proportion of youth placed in DJS facilities far from their home communities is that the primary mechanism used to effectuate outside contact – phones – consistently malfunction, and this causes unnecessary anxiety and frustration. The phone service is the responsibility of GTL, a prison communication supply company.

Another quality and service-related issue at DJS facilities concerns the Bob Barker Company prison clothing and shoes given to incarcerated young people around the State. It is of dubious quality and quickly wears out. As with the current phone service, the prison issue clothing is poor value for Maryland taxpayer dollars and the Department of Juvenile Services should discontinue working with providers who do not provide appropriate products and adequate service for incarcerated youth.

Meal portions at DJS-operated detention and placement facilities, including the youth centers, are sparsely seasoned and strictly monitored for calorie count, even down to severely rationing or disallowing youth to use condiments. The United States Department of Agriculture nutrition standards (that DJS adheres to) are supposed to ensure that meals are both nutritious and appealing to children and young people, but the guidelines make no allowance for the large number of incarcerated teenagers for whom scarcity and restricted portions of food is a clinical issue. For many incarcerated teenagers, the food allowance is inadequate, and they consistently complain about going hungry. The Department of Juvenile Services should attempt to gain an exemption from federal rules restricting food portions for the young people in the Department's care.

Respectfully submitted,

*Nick Moroney*

Nick Moroney  
Maryland Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit

# JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT 2024 THIRD QUARTER REPORT

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# JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM UPDATE

## JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM UPDATE

The JJMU reports on Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) operated secure detention and committed placement centers and DJS-licensed group homes where monitors conduct unannounced visits to guard against abuse and ensure children and young people in custody receive appropriate treatment and services. The visits and reports increase accountability and raise awareness about issues and needs. The JJMU has driven positive systemic change being formed at a time of widespread systemic abuse. The Unit promotes the adoption of best practices aimed toward positive outcomes for young people in contact with the justice system – an approach that enhances public safety.

The detention and placement centers operated by DJS have always held a disproportionate number of young people of color when compared with the overall state population and now we, as a state, are also filling DJS detention centers with children and young people automatically charged as adults. Youth automatically charged as adults currently comprise approximately 60% of the population currently held in DJS secure detention. The automatic charging of young people as adults without a determinate court hearing and before the youth see a judge or magistrate results in extended stays awaiting court hearings to determine if the charge will be pursued and, if so, whether or not the young person concerned will remain under criminal court jurisdiction.

While youth in DJS-operated detention centers have ongoing access to more services, more protective elements and more oversight than those held in adult jails, the juvenile detention system is set up to offer short-term and not long-term services. The juvenile system centers on short-term service provision at the juvenile detention center level because young people charged as juveniles are usually held in secure detention for a period of a few days to a few weeks. In contrast, young people automatically charged in the criminal justice system are held in secure detention for many months or even a year or more before receiving a determinate court decision.

Detention centers are holding places that do not provide young people with individualized help and support. Youth became disengaged from normal social interaction and from educational goals and are housed with similarly disengaged peers as they try to cope with feelings of isolation and grief without adequate therapeutic help or family support. All securely detained young people, including those held in DJS facilities, are isolated from their loved ones and other sources of social support and miss out on opportunities they may have had in their schools and communities. Many facilities have little or no appreciable outdoor space for incarcerated young people to get regular fresh air.

Most incarcerated young people have a history of struggle with mental health issues, trauma, unsafe living conditions, addiction, physical or sexual exploitation, and yet some people continue to believe that juvenile or adult jails and prisons are the only settings where vulnerable or troubled young people can be safe and receive services.



Many of us have also insisted that changes are needed to improve public safety permanently through thoughtful investments in effective community resources that provide consistent and comprehensive services and supports that help break negative cycles so that young people do not end up in courts and jails or placements and prisons but are instead engaged in living wage jobs or are attending good schools.

Public safety would be more assured if all Maryland communities were appropriately resourced to serve youth locally. It is a sad and preventable state of affairs that Maryland does not provide adequate or individualized services so that young people can receive effective, early intervention in their communities and before contact with a justice system that is frequently punitive, expensive and ineffective.

While we understand the shortcomings of the juvenile system as a whole, we also see that the current DJS administration is making changes aimed at producing better outcomes for youth, communities and public safety. We should also understand that DJS alone cannot address the structural conditions that have contributed to concentrated violence in certain areas of the state and the resulting trauma that communities (including young people) suffer as a result of their exposure to such violence.

It is past time to support a move away from utilizing remote facilities to house young people and toward funding and using local community-based resources (both non-residential and residential) that offer constructive and specialized services for young people. Active support from the public and from government officials for investment in community-based organizations that are focused on providing mental health, education, and employment resources for young people and their families living within under-resourced areas and neighborhoods is a critical component to tackling the complex root causes of violent and other crimes.

Rather than reversing course yet again and returning to failed punitive policies and approaches, we should support all Maryland communities and applaud constructive initiatives piloted by DJS and allow these efforts a reasonable amount of time to demonstrate efficacy as we carefully measure the outcomes. If we do not pursue such a course, the result is hardly in doubt; we will continue to witness the same problems recurring over and over again as the cycle of crime and punishment continues.

## DJS Hardware Secure Detention

### 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)
- Charles H. Hickey, Jr., Shelter (Hickey Shelter)

## DJS Committed Placement

### Long-term, post-disposition:

- Victor Cullen Center (Cullen)
- PEACE Academy for Girls (at WMCC)
- Backbone Mountain youth center
- Green Ridge youth center

## Incident and Population Trends

### Third quarter 2024 population and incident trends versus the third quarter of 2023:

- ❖ The population of incarcerated youth in DJS facilities continued to rise. The average daily population (ADP) of youth rose in all DJS-operated secure detention centers except for LESCC (which fell by 1 youth). The youth population also increased at the Victor Cullen placement center and fell slightly (by 2 youth) at the youth centers.
- ❖ Youth-on-youth fights and assaults in secure detention centers increased at CYDC (Cheltenham) and WMCC but decreased at Hickey and LESCC. The number remained the same at BCJJC. Fights and assaults decreased in committed placement at the Youth Centers and Victor Cullen.
- ❖ Physical restraints of youth by staff increased at all DJS-operated secure detention centers except for LESCC. Staff use of physical restraints on youth also increased in committed placement at the youth centers: at Green Ridge, there were 107 instances during the quarter while the average daily youth population was 26; at Backbone Mountain, there were 57 instances with the same youth ADP (26) at that facility. Physical restraints of youth by staff also increased at the Victor Cullen committed placement center.
- ❖ The use of mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) on youth inside secure detention facilities decreased at CYDC (Cheltenham) but increased at WMCC and LESCC. The usage numbers did not change at BCJJC and Hickey. Mechanical restraint usage increased in committed placement at Cullen and at the Youth Centers.
- ❖ Incidents of reported seclusion decreased at Victor Cullen committed placement center and remained at the same level at the youth centers. Seclusion also decreased at the BCJJC, Hickey and LESCC secure detention centers but increased at CYDC and WMCC.
- ❖ There were two attempts at suicide and 54 reports involving suicide ideation from DJS-operated facilities during the third quarter. Detention centers accounted for 19 while placement centers accounted for 35 (all 35 reports came from the youth centers, with none reported from Victor Cullen). There were 13 reports of self-injurious behavior from DJS-operated facilities during the reporting period.

# 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 youth. Black youth represented 91% of total entries during the third quarter of 2024 (compared to 87% during the same period in 2023). Hispanic/Latino youth represented 3% of entries to BCJJC during the second quarter of 2024 (compared to 6% during the same period in 2023).

<b>BCJJC – Selected Incident Categories</b>	<b>Q3 2022</b>	<b>Q3 2023</b>	<b>Q3 2024</b>
<b>Average Daily Population (ADP)</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>92</b>
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	52	79	79
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	4	8	7
3. Physical Restraint	55	51	70
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	13	8	8
5. Seclusion	20	8	4
6. Contraband	7	2	2
7. Suicide Ideation	8	3	4
8. Suicide Attempt	1	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	2	0	0

The number of young people held at BCJJC (and throughout the system at DJS-operated facilities) continues to increase. The average daily population at BCJJC increased by 6% during the third quarter of 2024 compared to the third quarter in 2023. The number of youth automatically charged as adults as a proportion of the BCJJC population also continues to be high. In BCJJC in September of 2024, for example, the

average daily population of youth automatically charged as adults was 56 compared with 38 charged as juveniles.

Although youth automatically charged as adults spend months or even a year or more held in detention centers waiting for a court decision, DJS has limited clinical resources to manage detained youth, and services offered at the larger DJS-operated detention centers (BCJJC, Cheltenham [CYDC], and Hickey) by the current mental health vendor are limited to coverage of basic clinical services and acute crisis management.

When comparing the occurrence of incidents in the third quarter of 2024 with the same period in 2023, incident numbers decreased or remained about the same at BCJJC, with the exception of an increase in the number of physical restraints of youth by staff.

A DJS Residential Innovations Team is doing positive work in tandem with leadership, direct care staff and youth at BCJJC. The team and the facility superintendent and staff have worked together to successfully start to improve culture and practice for youth and staff at BCJJC. The team has more recently started working at WMCC detention and placement center for girls and young women and will soon begin work at the Victor Cullen placement center for boys and young men.

DJS staff are to be commended for planning and offering activities and programming for the young people at BCJJC, including a program for young fathers at BCJJC (the fathers' group meetings do need to be more structured and should occur more frequently). Staff also successfully organized a hair braiding program.

There were a number of other activities and opportunities to join several events available to the young people incarcerated at BCJJC during the reporting period, including a ropes course and reflections trip, a facility field day, youth versus staff basketball, a BCJJC "carnival" event, a youth mental health-related arts event, and happenings centered on family engagement.

While family engagement and contact with legal counsel are essential to youth at BCJJC and all other DJS detention and placement facilities, the primary mechanism used to effectuate outside contact – phones – consistently malfunction, and this causes unnecessary anxiety and frustration. The phone service is the responsibility of GTL, a prison communication supply company.

Additionally, the Bob Barker Company prison issue clothing and shoes are poorly manufactured and soon wear out. As with GTL, the prison issue clothing and footwear represent poor value for Maryland taxpayer dollars and the Department of Juvenile Services should discontinue working with providers who do not provide adequate products and services for incarcerated youth.

Meal portions at DJS-operated detention and placement facilities, including BCJJC, are sparsely seasoned and strictly monitored for calorie count, even down to severely rationing or disallowing youth to use condiments.

On a monitoring visit to BCJJC in September, a monitor and a DJS child advocate worked together to address situations when youth were bartering food and phone calls amongst each other. This needed to be addressed and stopped but the issue is complicated by the phone and food service issues outlined above.

The United States Department of Agriculture nutrition standards (that DJS adheres to) are supposed to ensure that meals are both nutritious and appealing to children and young people, but the guidelines make no allowance for the large number of incarcerated teenagers for whom scarcity and restricted portions of food is a clinical issue. For many incarcerated teenagers, the food allowance is inadequate, and they consistently complain about going hungry. 'For these reasons, the Department of Juvenile Services should attempt to gain an exemption from federal rules restricting food portions for the young people in the Department's care.

There were teacher vacancies in physical education, Math, Special Education and Science at the BCJJC school during the reporting period.

A post-high school program for students who have graduated started during the reporting period (at the end of August of 2024).

## Cheltenham Youth Detention Center

Cheltenham Youth Detention Center (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 78% of total youth entries during the third quarter of 2024, compared to 77% during the third quarter of 2023. Hispanic/Latino youth represented 15% of entries during the third quarter of 2024, compared to 13% during the same period in 2023.

<b>CYDC– Selected Incident Categories</b>	<b>Q2 2022</b>	<b>Q2 2023</b>	<b>Q2 2024</b>
<b>Average Daily Population (ADP)</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>69</b>
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	23	48	69
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	2	3	9
3. Physical Restraint	32	53	89
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	1	16	12
5. Seclusion	14	17	32
6. Contraband	4	10	12
7. Suicide Ideation	3	4	2
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	12	2	8

The number of young people held at Cheltenham (and throughout the system at DJS-operated facilities) continues to increase. The number of youth automatically charged as adults as a proportion of the CYDC population also continues to be high. At CYDC during August of 2024, for example, the average daily population of youth automatically charged as adults was 36 compared with 33 charged as juveniles.

Although youth automatically charged as adults spend months or even a year or more held in detention centers waiting for a court decision, DJS has limited clinical resources to manage detained youth, and services offered at the larger DJS-operated detention centers (Cheltenham, Hickey, and BCJJC) by the current mental health vendor are limited to coverage of basic clinical services and acute crisis management.

There was a large number of reported seclusions of youth by staff and administrators at CYDC during the third quarter reporting period, and this is a recurring issue at the Cheltenham facility. The numbers of fights/assaults and physical restraints of youth by staff also increased at CYDC during the third quarter of 2024, in comparison to the same period in 2023.

Staff availability to work in coverage is an issue (especially on weekends), and this makes maintaining safety more difficult and makes it extremely hard to offer appropriate levels of activities and programming for youth outside of school hours. Administrators as well as other supervisors should make themselves available to help with supervision duties, as needed.

The fenced-in outside recreational field and running track for youth at the back of the facility continues to be sparsely used while (absent severe weather) it should be the default area utilized as a daily exercise space for the incarcerated young people at Cheltenham.

Inventory and basic needs of youth are not provided on a timely basis at CYDC. Youth requested gym shorts during the current (summer) reporting period and the request went unfulfilled (while, at the same time, being available to youth at other DJS facilities).

There were broken locks at the facility during the reporting period that took months to properly fix. The living pods were not cleaned in a timely fashion and were only attended to after repeated requests. When televisions, game systems or radios break or malfunction, an inordinate amount of time passes before they are fixed or replaced, even though TV watching, video game playing and listening to the radio are amongst the few pastimes available to the incarcerated youth outside of school time at CYDC.

While family engagement and contact with legal counsel are essential to youth at CYDC and all other DJS detention and placement facilities, the primary mechanism used to effectuate outside contact – phones – consistently malfunction, and this causes unnecessary anxiety and frustration. The phone service is the responsibility of GTL, a prison communication supply company.

Additionally, the “Bob Barker” prison issue clothing, shoes, etc., are poorly manufactured and quickly wear out. As with GTL, the prison issue clothing and footwear represent poor value for Maryland taxpayer dollars and the Department of Juvenile Services should discontinue working with providers who do not provide adequate products and services for incarcerated youth.



On the positive side, services on the pending placement unit at CYDC (where youth preparing to go to a treatment facility are held) have improved.

Another positive element regarding CYDC is the local citizens who make up the advisory board for the Cheltenham facility as they contribute to community engagement and actively plan and carry out events for the young people incarcerated there.

**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 accounted for 87% of entries during the third quarter of 2024, an increase compared to 85% during the same period in 2023. Hispanic/Latino accounted for 5% of entries during the third quarter of this year, unchanged from the same time in 2023.

Hickey – Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2022	Q3 2023	Q3 2024
<b>Average Daily Population (ADP)</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>70</b>
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	42	51	46
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	0	0	4
3. Physical Restraint	38	59	71
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	6	4	4
5. Seclusion	13	12	9
6. Contraband	2	8	1
7. Suicide Ideation	1	4	2
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	1	0	0

The incarcerated youth population continues to increase throughout the deep end of the Maryland juvenile justice system. The average daily population of youth in Hickey increased by 19% when comparing the third quarter of 2024 with the same period in 2023.

The number of youth automatically charged as adults as a proportion of the Hickey population also continues to be high. At Hickey during July of 2024, for example, the average daily population of youth automatically charged as adults was 55 compared with 15 charged as juveniles.

Although youth automatically charged as adults spend months or even a year or more held in detention centers waiting for a court decision, DJS has limited clinical resources to manage detained youth, and services offered at the larger DJS-operated detention centers (Hickey, BCJJC, and Cheltenham [CYDC]) by the current mental health vendor are limited to coverage of basic clinical services and acute crisis management. At Hickey, mental health professionals are in offices rather than based on youth living units and also do not follow students to school during school hours.

In September 2024, new school classrooms and offices were opened. Unfortunately, there were a number of teacher vacancies at the facility and an instructor resigned during the reporting period. Three young people completed high school graduation requirements at Hickey during the third quarter and, for those interested and ready to take the GED, the tests are offered weekly.

There is also a recently restarted post-high school program for youth who have graduated, and the initiative is off to a solid start at Hickey, with six youth taking part during the reporting period, however, more opportunities and activities are needed for graduates.

Outside of school time, administrators, supervisors, staff and youth at Hickey have devised and implemented many constructive ways of keeping the young people there occupied and active: Hickey has a youth-tended vegetable garden and popular hair braiding program.

There is also a book club; a chess club; and a BMX Sports group, as well as many other activities and happenings on offer: Fun Food Fridays; picture day; karaoke; paint night; basketball tournaments; reflections ropes course; field/sports day; NFL picks competition; flag football; back to school events; "Hickey Olympics"; and family engagement gatherings including a "family day".

Young people incarcerated at Hickey whose families live in other parts of the state can request virtual visits if the family has transportation issues.

While family engagement and contact with legal counsel are essential to youth at Hickey and all other DJS detention and placement facilities, the primary mechanism used to effectuate outside contact – phones – consistently malfunction, and this causes unnecessary anxiety and frustration. The phone service is the responsibility of GTL, a prison communication supply company.

Additionally, the Bob Barker Company prison issue clothing and shoes are poorly manufactured and quickly wear out. As with GTL, the prison issue clothing and footwear

represent poor value for Maryland taxpayer dollars and the Department of Juvenile Services should discontinue working with providers who do not provide adequate products and services for incarcerated youth.

### **The Hickey Shelter**

There is a shelter care program for boys and girls on the Hickey facility grounds but outside the fence of the Hickey detention component. The program started in 2022 and is overseen by DJS administrators from the Hickey detention center. Direct-care staff from the detention facility supervise the youth in the shelter.

There is plentiful supply of food and other necessities at the shelter and the DJS direct-care staff provide caring support to the young people placed there. However, there is a need for training to help staff be less corrections-orientated in their approach.

The young people in the shelter are able to use air fryers and other small kitchen appliances under staff supervision. They expressed that they would like to assist with food service tasks, including the preparation of their own meals. There were plans for the youth in the shelter to take part in a basic food hygiene program called ServeSafe, but that idea has not been effectuated yet.

There is a DJS activities coordinator for the shelter and there were numerous off-grounds activities organized for shelter youth over the summer including swimming, visits to Hershey Park, Six Flags and to the Air and Space Museum and the zoo in Washington, D.C. Pastimes within the facility included watching movies and playing games.

Recommendations regarding shelter care:

- The Department needs to continue to provide regular (non-prison issue) clothing for young people in the shelter at no cost to youth or their families. There should be planned family engagement-related events and activities for the boys and girls housed in the shelter.

- More attention needs to be centered on ensuring that youth at the shelter start school on time and clinical staff should receive enhanced training in helping to care for high-needs youth. And the girls and young women at the shelter should have access to a female therapist and to services related to hair care (on- and off-site) and alternative hairstyles.

- The Department of Juvenile Services and the Department of Human Services should ensure coordination regarding the continued provision of appropriate services for youth; a youth was released from the shelter during the quarter and was then placed in a hotel by another state agency. Another youth at the shelter (also during the third quarter) had been there for over six months without future placement planning being completed.

## Thomas J.S. Waxter Children's Center

The Thomas J.S. Waxter Children's Center (Waxter) in 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 facility, which closed in March of 2022, was aged, cramped and in disrepair. 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. Girls at Waxter were transferred to Noyes 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 in Cheltenham, Prince George's County (CYDC), until repairs could be made to the Noyes AC unit. The girls were transported back to the Noyes facility at Rockville in June of 2022.

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

Detained girls remained at CYDC until October of 2023, when they were moved to the Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC) located in Hagerstown, Maryland. When capacity is reached at that facility, newly detained girls are taken to Lower Easter Shore Detention Center in Salisbury. At time of writing (August of 2024), WMCC houses girls and young women in placement and pending placement status, as well as those in detention and a section of the LESCC facility in Salisbury is also currently being utilized to cope with the increasing number of girls and young women who are being incarcerated in Maryland.

Girls and young women in the juvenile justice system have different medical, reproductive health, mental health, and trauma-related needs than boys. They deserve adequate space, services and a setting that is tailored to meet their circumstances.

!

## Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center

The Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center, located in Montgomery County, was a Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department) owned and operated maximum security detention center with a DJS-rated population capacity of 29.

Noyes was temporarily closed in early December of 2021, and boys and girls then housed at Noyes were moved to other DJS detention centers. DJS converted the facility to an all-girls detention center, and girls who would have been housed at the all-girls Waxter detention center in Laurel (which had an aged and deteriorating physical plant) were moved to Noyes on March 1, 2022. Due to both facility conditions at Noyes and staffing issues at the Cheltenham facility, detained girls were displaced several times throughout 2022.

In April of 2022, an air conditioner handler unit caught fire at the Noyes facility and girls were relocated and housed on one unit at Cheltenham Youth Detention Center (CYDC) for boys until repairs could be made to the Noyes AC unit. The girls and young women were transported back to the Noyes facility in June of 2022.

In mid-October of 2022, the Noyes facility was again temporarily shuttered and detained girls and young women awaiting adjudication and many of the staffers from Noyes were transferred to Cheltenham (as part of an effort to boost staffing at CYDC).

Detained girls remained at CYDC until October of 2023, when they were moved to Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC) located in Hagerstown, Maryland. When capacity is reached at that facility, newly detained girls are taken to Lower Easter Shore Detention Center in Salisbury. At time of writing (October of 2024), the number of girls incarcerated in Maryland is continuing to increase and WMCC is housing girls and young women in placement and pending placement status as well as those in detention and there are detained girls being held in Salisbury as well.

The facility at Noyes was staffed by people experienced in working constructively and empathetically with detained girls and young women. The physical plant consisted of several living units, a separate school area, and outdoor space which allowed staff to better manage group dynamics. The location of Noyes in Rockville, Montgomery County, enabled DJS and the education administration at Noyes to leverage local resources to benefit both youth and staff, and the results included enhanced education services.

Girls in the juvenile justice system have different medical, reproductive health, mental health, and trauma-related needs than boys. If the state continues to incarcerate girls<sup>1</sup>, they deserve adequate space, services and a setting that is tailored to meet their circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> Some states and jurisdictions have committed to ending the incarceration of girls by devoting resources to community-based interventions, supports, and programs that can better serve the needs of young people. See Dholakia, Nazish and Rosenthal, Lindsay (October 4, 2022), "Hawai'i is so Close to Ending the Incarceration of Young Girls, Vera Institute of Justice, available at: [Hawai'i Is So Close to Ending the Incarceration of Young Girls | Vera Institute](#). See also the Vera's Initiative to End Girls' Incarceration,

## Lower Eastern Shore Children’s Center

The Lower Eastern Shore Children’s Center (LESCC) is a hardware secure detention center located in Salisbury. 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.

LESCC – Selected Incident Categories	Q3 2022	Q3 2023	Q3 2024
<b>Average Daily Population (ADP)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	13	36	11
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	6	2	2
3. Physical Restraint	47	49	33
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	1	0	2
5. Seclusion	6	2	1
6. Contraband	3	3	0
7. Suicide Ideation	3	3	6
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	1
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	0	1

While the average daily youth population at LESCC changed little in the third quarter of 2024 compared with the same time in 2023, incident numbers were substantially down.

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available at: <https://www.vera.org/ending-mass-incarceration/reducing-incarceration/reducing-jail-and-prison-population/ending-girls-incarceration-initiative#:~:text=Vera's%20Initiative%20to%20End%20Girls,juvenile%20legal%20system%20by%202030.>

In addition to detained boys and girls from Maryland's eastern shore, LESCC currently houses some detained girls from elsewhere in the state as WMCC, the designated facility for detained girls and young women, is frequently close to capacity.

Black youth held in LESCC represented 88% of entries during the third quarter of 2024, up from 73% during the same period last year. Hispanic/Latinx youth accounted for 4% of youth entries in the third quarter of 2024, down compared to 7% at the same time in 2023.

The number of youth held at LESCC who have been automatically charged as adults as a proportion of the facility population continues to be high, and this upward trajectory is occurring throughout the DJS-operated detention system. In LESCC during August of 2024, for example, the average daily population of youth automatically charged as adults was 11 compared with 10 charged as juveniles.

LESCC continues to benefit from strong management and dedicated and caring staff including experienced leadership that models a positive, therapeutic and individualized approach to youth while they are in detention. The LESCC administration promotes staff accountability and staff strive to minimize the use of potentially traumatizing practices such as seclusion and mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) on the children and young people held there.

While family engagement and contact with legal counsel are essential to youth at LESCC and all other DJS detention and placement facilities, the primary mechanism used to effectuate outside contact – phones – consistently malfunction, and this causes unnecessary anxiety and frustration. The phone service is the responsibility of GTL, a prison communication supply company.

Additionally, the Bob Barker Company prison issue clothing and shoes are poorly manufactured and soon wear out. As with GTL, the prison issue clothing and footwear represent poor value for Maryland taxpayer dollars and the Department of Juvenile Services should discontinue working with providers who do not provide adequate products and services for incarcerated youth.



## Western Maryland Children’s Center

Western Maryland Children’s Center (WMCC), located in Washington County, is a 24-bed maximum security detention and placement center for girls owned and operated by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department). The facility consists of three living units – a larger sized unit which contains 12 cells and two smaller living units of six cells each.

Currently, WMCC is the only DJS facility housing young people in placement status in addition to youth in detention status, and there is limited outdoor and classroom space for youth as well as limited office space for mental health professionals and other staff. There is not a regionally based DJS detention or placement center for girls and young women and the incarcerated youth are being held far from their families and communities.

Black youth represented 77% of total youth entries during the third quarter of 2024 compared to 71% over the same period in 2023. Hispanic/Latina youth accounted for 13% of total youth entries in the third quarter of 2024, compared to 10% during the same period in 2023.

<b>WMCC – Selected Incident Categories</b>	<b>Q3 2022</b>	<b>Q3 2023</b>	<b>Q3 2024</b>
<b>Average Daily Population (ADP)</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	11	15	19
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	4	1	8
3. Physical Restraint	28	30	71
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	9	8	15
5. Seclusion	4	3	6
6. Contraband	0	1	2
7. Suicide Ideation	3	2	5
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	1
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	1	3

The current reporting period involved a continuation of high numbers of incidents involving the use by staff of physical and mechanical restraints on youth and an increase in the occurrence of youth-on-staff assaults, indicating a need to improve staff/youth communication and provide more effective staff training on interacting with youth.

A Departmental team has started work on improving the facility culture and practice for youth and staff at WMCC. In addition to starting to work with leadership, staff and the girls and young women at WMCC, the DJS Residential Innovations Team will soon begin work at the Victor Cullen placement center for boys and young men. The team has already accomplished positive work in tandem with leadership, direct care staff and youth at BCJJC. The team and the BCJJC facility superintendent and staff have worked together to successfully start to improve culture and practice for youth and staff at that facility.

Instruction in and modeling of conflict resolution and restorative solutions in addition to enhanced de-escalation methodology is missing at WMCC. Staff need intensive training on how to form and maintain constructive relationships with the girls and young women incarcerated at the facility. In addition to the data contained in the table above, focus groups held at WMCC support these findings.

The young people incarcerated at WMCC want (and need) more opportunities for family engagement (including virtual as well as in-person visits) and also consistently request more activities be available to them at the facility, including art and dance-related pastimes and a chance to crochet and do yoga.

While family engagement and contact with legal counsel are essential to youth at WMCC and all other DJS detention and placement facilities, the primary mechanism used to effectuate outside contact – phones – consistently malfunction, and this causes unnecessary anxiety and frustration. The phone service is the responsibility of GTL, a prison communication supply company.

Additionally, the “Bob Barker” prison issue clothing, shoes, etc., are poorly manufactured and quickly wear out. As with GTL, the prison issue clothing and footwear represent poor value for Maryland taxpayer dollars and the Department of Juvenile Services should discontinue working with providers who do not provide adequate products and services for incarcerated youth.

## **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 27 youth. Black youth represented 78% of total entries during the third quarter of 2024, compared with 79% during the same period in 2023. Hispanic/Latino youth accounted for 11% of total youth entries in the third quarter of 2024 compared to 5% at the same time last year.

<b>Victor Cullen – Selected Incident Categories</b>	<b>Q3 2022</b>	<b>Q3 2023</b>	<b>Q3 2024</b>
<b>Average Daily Population (ADP)</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	13	16	14
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	1	6	8
3. Physical Restraint	19	28	30
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	3	11	13
5. Seclusion	0	5	4
6. Contraband	1	8	9
7. Suicide Ideation	0	2	0
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	2	1

The average daily population at Cullen and the occurrence of incidents remained at relatively the same level, when comparing the third quarter of this year with the same time in 2023.

A shortage of adequate numbers of direct care workers reporting for work to cover shifts at the facility remained a serious concern at Cullen throughout the reporting period. Young people were not moved from living units to the dining hall on some days during the third quarter because there were not enough staffers at the facility to ensure safe

movement of youth within the facility. The off-grounds work programming for high school graduates at Cullen was also curtailed during the third quarter, whenever there was not a male staffer available to go off-grounds with the qualifying youth.

The on-grounds school hosted a successful parent-teacher event, and two students graduated during the reporting period.

The young people at Cullen were able to go bowling on one occasion and were able to partake in a ropes course. However, there are few off-grounds activities and not enough on-site activities available to youth outside of school time, especially over the weekend, and some youth complained that they would prefer to be back in detention because there was more to do, and it was easier to stay constructively occupied. While there is often little to do, youth at Cullen are being told they must use points awarded to them by staff for compliant behavior to “rent” the available video games and movies - this situation is unique to Cullen; it is not the practice in any other DJS-operated facility.

While family engagement and contact with legal counsel are essential to youth at Cullen and all other DJS detention and placement facilities, the primary mechanism used to effectuate outside contact – phones – consistently malfunction, and this causes unnecessary anxiety and frustration. The phone service is the responsibility of GTL, a prison communication supply company.

Additionally, the Bob Barker Company prison issue clothing and shoes are poorly manufactured and soon wear out. As with GTL, the prison issue clothing and footwear represent poor value for Maryland taxpayer dollars and the Department of Juvenile Services should discontinue working with providers who do not provide adequate products and services for incarcerated youth.

Youth at Cullen reported that the issuance of rationed basic needs items such as fresh underwear and hygiene products is often delayed. During a monitoring visit in July, a youth stated that he had not received fresh underwear for two weeks. Direct care staffers said the youth were correct in saying that the supply chain is broken and told the monitor that they themselves cannot access basic needs supplies to give to youth.

During the reporting period, young people at Cullen complained that their therapy hours were not being properly accounted for – treatment hours govern assessed progress and are controlling in determining the length of a youth’s stay at the facility. Administrators at DJS headquarters intervened to correct the problem.

Case management at Cullen has also been the subject of complaints as a number of youth stated that they did not see their assigned facility case manager for protracted periods of time. In July, several youth said that they had only seen their case manager on two occasions over a period of a month. They added that they were told by other staffers that the reason for the absence of case managers was that there were recurring “callouts” and “no-shows”. One youth also said that his “community re-entry” paperwork had been delayed because there was no one available ensure it was completed.

A Departmental team will soon begin work aimed at improving the facility culture and practice for youth and staff at Victor Cullen placement center for boys and young men. The DJS Residential Innovations Team has already accomplished positive work in tandem with leadership, direct care staff and youth at the BCJJC detention facility, where the team and the BCJJC facility superintendent and staff have worked together and have successfully started to improve culture and practice for both youth and staff at that facility.

### **Garrett Children's Center (formerly Savage Mountain Youth Center)**

The Garrett Children's Center (GCC/Garrett), located in rural Garrett County, 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.

Garrett was fully operational for approximately 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. Some staff continue to report to the site, including teachers who provide online courses used to mitigate vacancies for certified teachers in core content areas at other DJS placement and detention facilities around the state.

## 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). Black youth represented 76% of total youth entries to the youth centers during the third quarter of 2024 compared to 78% of entries during the same period in 2023. Hispanic/Latino youth represented 13% of entries to the youth centers during the current reporting period compared to 10% in the third quarter of 2023.

<b>Combined Youth Centers (x2) – Selected Incident Categories</b>	<b>Q3 2022</b>	<b>Q3 2023</b>	<b>Q3 2024</b>
<b>Average Daily Population (ADP)</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>52</b>
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	13	36	31
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	8	12	18
3. Physical Restraint	53	159	164
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	16	19	32
5. Seclusion	0	1	1
6. Contraband	7	13	3
7. Suicide Ideation	11	8	35
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	1	0

## **THE YOUTH CENTERS**

During the third quarter reporting period, there was an average daily population of 26 young people at Green Ridge and 26 at Backbone. Populations have increased in DJS placements just as they have in detention. More youth are being incarcerated in Maryland than were being locked up before the pandemic.



Family engagement and contact with positive influences as well as legal counsel are essential to the young people at the youth centers and all other DJS detention and placement facilities. While DJS leadership encourages youth contact with constructive and supportive influences (mentors and concerned extended family members), some facility and community case managers are not in agreement with this approach and are not proactively helping youth to extend supports beyond immediate family members.

Another impediment to family engagement for youth placed far from home is that the primary mechanism used to effectuate outside contact – phones – consistently malfunction, and this causes unnecessary anxiety and frustration. The phone service is the responsibility of GTL, a prison communications supply company.

Another quality and service-related issue concerns the Bob Barker Company prison clothing and shoes given to incarcerated young people around the State. It is of dubious quality and soon wears out.

As with the current phone service, the prison issue clothing is poor value for Maryland taxpayer dollars and the Department of Juvenile Services should discontinue working with providers who do not provide appropriate products and adequate service for incarcerated youth.

Meal portions at DJS-operated detention and placement facilities, including the youth centers, are sparsely seasoned and strictly monitored for calorie count, even down to severely rationing or disallowing youth to use condiments.

The United States Department of Agriculture nutrition standards (that DJS adheres to) are supposed to ensure that meals are both nutritious and appealing to children and young people, but the guidelines make no allowance for the large number of incarcerated teenagers for whom scarcity and restricted portions of food is a clinical issue. For many incarcerated teenagers, the food allowance is inadequate, and they consistently complain about going hungry.

The Department of Juvenile Services should attempt to gain an exemption from federal rules restricting food portions for the young people in the Department's care.

Young people at the youth centers complain about the hygiene products they are given, with a number of youth stating that the soap-based products are of poor quality, causing them to break out in rashes. Youth also stated that soap, toothpaste and deodorant rations are too meager to permit them to stay clean and odor free. A number of staff corroborated the details that the youth reported.

## **GREEN RIDGE YOUTH CENTER CONCERNS AND ADVANCES**

During the third quarter reporting period, there was an average daily population of 26 young people at Green Ridge and 26 at Backbone. Populations have increased in DJS placements just as they have in detention. More youth are being incarcerated in Maryland than were being locked up before the pandemic.

There were more physical restraints of youth by staff at the Green Ridge youth center (107) than at Backbone Mountain youth center (57), or any other DJS placement or detention facility. The number of mechanical restraints and reports of suicide ideation at Green Ridge were also the highest among DJS placements and detention centers.

Youth at Green Ridge have requested articles related to religious practice and these should be provided by the Department at no cost (as is done at other DJS-operated facilities).

On the positive side, there is a new (perhaps temporary) acting superintendent at the facility as of the beginning of the fourth quarter, and two appropriately qualified (LSCWC) mental health therapists were hired into Green Ridge during the third quarter reporting period. Additionally, the condition of the physical plant at Green Ridge has substantially improved and the availability of recreational activities for young people incarcerated there has also improved.

Vacant positions within the education department were filled and two students completed high school graduation requirements (a graduation ceremony was set for Oct 24<sup>th</sup>). After-school programming at Green Ridge - and at other DJS-operated facilities - is due to restart as soon as budget technicalities are ironed out.

## **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 youth safety in the program, staff supervision issues, 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 halted.

## **SMALLER FACILITY UPDATES**

## SMALLER FACILITY UPDATES

### Morning Star Youth Academy

Morning Star Youth Academy is a staff secure (not locked or fenced) committed placement center on Maryland's eastern shore. The facility is operated by VisionQuest, Inc., and the residential component of the program can accept up to eight youth through DJS, which licenses Morning Star.

In addition to residential services, Morning Star-VisionQuest also operates an alternative day school on-grounds serving students from the surrounding county (Dorchester County). Residential and day students are kept separated on the campus. There are only two full-time teachers to cover the instructional needs of both the residential and day students and so there is not a lot of on-site teaching instruction as students work largely on their own with help from teachers available on request.

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

The number of incidents involving aggression at Morning Star remains low and communication between staff and youth is positive and supportive. However, staff shortage is an issue, and administrators are in direct care coverage at times to bolster the number of available line staff.

Youth at Morning Star have opportunities to participate in more on- and off-site recreational activities than at DJS-operated placement facilities. Some youth from Morning Star do volunteer work in the surrounding community and a small number of young people from the facility work in nearby businesses.

However, more activities are needed, especially on weekends. Administrators should expand the scope and availability of activities and incorporate youth voice in recreation planning.

The Morning Star physical plant has long needed to be upgraded. The on-site swimming pool which provided a recreational activity during the summer needs is unusable (absent extensive repairs) and will not be operable for the foreseeable future. Administrators are planning to utilize a swimming pool in a nearby community. The onsite weight room does not have air conditioning or heating installed, so the resource cannot be used comfortably during the summer and winter months. The roof leaks in the gym while the floor is slippery and becomes hazardous when condensation is present.

Morning Star administrators are attempting to recruit a professional cook and, in the meantime, are relying on residential staff to make meals. Youth comment that the meal preparation needs improvement.

## 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 also began receiving referrals to house youth involved with the Maryland Department of Human Resources beginning in the second quarter of 2022.

One Love partners with community-based organizations to provide therapy, education, local employment and enrichment opportunities for youth while they reside in a home-like environment. Students are enrolled in local community schools where they work toward completing high school. The program is not highly structured and so One Love is best suited to mature and self-motivated youth, especially those who are preparing for independent living.

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF  
JUVENILE SERVICES – RESPONSE**



**DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES  
RESPONSE TO JJMU 2024 THIRD QUARTER REPORT**

DJS appreciates the opportunity to respond to the feedback shared in JJMU’s Third Quarter FY ‘24 Report (“the Report”).

The Department of Juvenile Services (“DJS” or “the Department”) acknowledges the continued need for improvement raised in the Report and is working to address issues identified by the JJMU and more broadly.

Rather than a point-by-point response and consistent with our recent practice, DJS is providing general comments including an update on DJS’ work to improve conditions in its residential facilities.

Update on DJS efforts to improve conditions and programming:

*Innovation Team updates*

As communicated previously, one of DJS’ primary strategies to improve conditions in its facilities is employed through its Facility Innovation Teams. During the most recent quarter of 2024 the Innovation Team has been focused on delivering and refining staff training curriculums and working on increasing the Innovation Team’s capacity to support its facility-based teams at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC), the Western Maryland Children’s Center (WMCC), and the Victor Cullen Center (VCC).

Unique Work Plans have been developed for each site, organized under three focus areas: **Culture** – building and strengthening a sense of community by improving communication and collaboration and creating opportunities for relationship and trust building; **Climate** – supporting staff and young people through policy and practice change, where they have a role in crafting the new



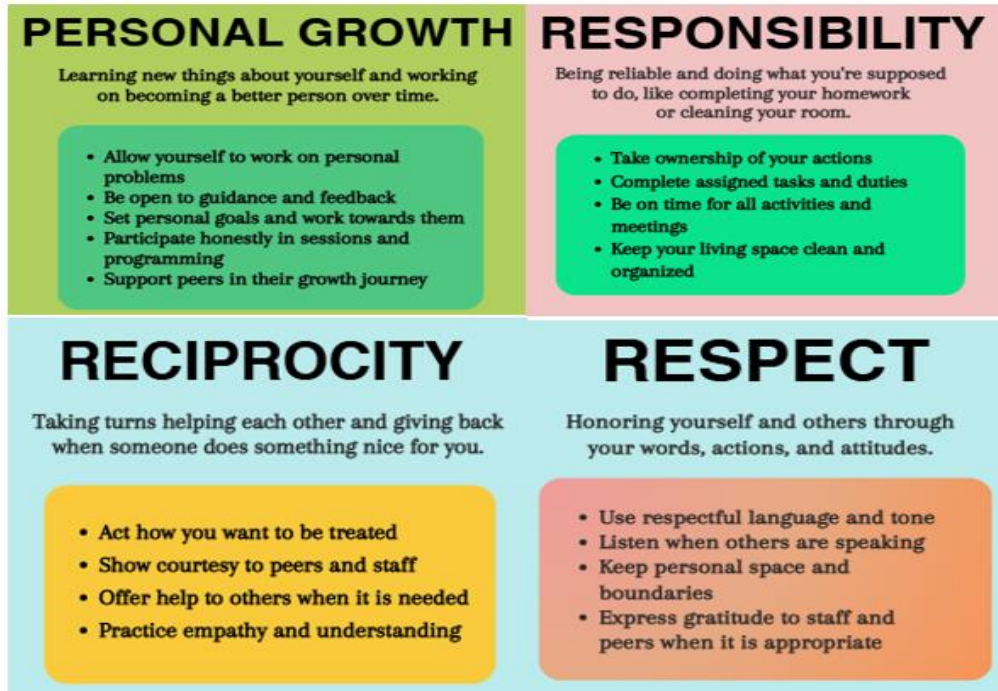
approach; and **Environment** - changing the physical space so it is more safe-feeling, comfortable, and humane.

In terms of capacity building, there are now project managers for all three sites. Additionally, work is being supported in three key areas: restorative justice, grass-root partnerships, and gender-specific training and facilitation.

#### *Key facility-based Innovation Team updates*

##### *BCJC:*

Staff training for DPod is almost complete, with the remaining training scheduled for the first week of December. Connected to training efforts is work at bringing multiple units together for a day of collective learning. The first effort of this type was held on Saturday, November 9th, where two units of staff and youth spent the full day together in the gym. The group successfully increased their knowledge about restorative and racial justice and strengthened community through storytelling and other communal activities. The plan is to continue to build community, while standing up a new operational model through practice and policy change. For DPod, more staff and youth combined training and other related events will happen in December. DPod created community norms as a group (see a sample of a few of these values in the image below), as will FPod. As cosmetic changes are wrapping up on FPod, DPod will be next for painting and other environmental upgrades. Finally, other aspects of the BCJC work plan are underway, including staffing an Education Workgroup that is exploring how to leverage the school wing opening by creating an implementation plan for how to organize school and classes by grade level.



Sample of community values, created by the young people and staff of DPod.

**WMCC:**

Staff focus groups are almost complete, with the last remaining cohorts to include 3rd shift, medical and dietary staff. The collaborative design process for a two-part mural in the main hallway is halfway done (see photo below). The second wall design is complete, and work will begin in December; youth and staff will continue to be involved throughout the entire creative process. Staff training dates for WMCC have been set for January, and in the meantime restorative justice training and skills-building are being provided in November and December. Steps are underway to establish a peer mentor welcoming group, where detention and committed youth will act as peer mentors to new incoming youth, by helping to introduce them to staff, their pod, while sharing expectations and information about the restorative practices culture being built. Connected to the “environment” section of the work plan, some environmental improvements are underway.



Mural created by staff and youth at Western Maryland Children's Center

#### VCC:

The VCC Innovation Team has been formed. To start, the team planned two key events. The first was a staffing stability workshopping session where 32 staff participated in a session aimed to generate ideas for how to increase staffing stability at Victor Cullen. Participants worked in small groups and generated a number of ideas for organizing an ideal shift schedule and staffing structure. Additionally, the Innovation Team hosted a "thank you" event where staff and youth were thanked for their participation in the focus groups. The focus group findings were shared, and it provided another opportunity for the team to again communicate the vision and goals of the work.

#### *Behavioral Health updates*

The department remains committed to bolstering its Behavioral Health workforce through active recruitment efforts across the state. DJS has hired several key positions and is utilizing contracted, licensed clinicians to cover vacancies. Pending Placement Units continue to implement an enhanced pre-treatment model, seeking to mirror the intensity of committed treatment programs. This proactive approach improves the transition for youth into a more specialized setting. DJS has increased the amount of clinical treatment hours to committed youth awaiting placement which greatly impacts their preparedness for treatment upon transfer.

Committed treatment programs are leveraging a Tiered Intervention protocol to deliver individualized and effective treatment plans. To streamline assessment processes and enhance consistency, Behavioral Health is rigorously evaluating screening and assessment practices, as well as standardizing reporting language.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) has been integrated into Pending Placement and Committed Treatment Programs, with plans to expand training to all detention facilities. DBT supervisors and coordinators are actively working to increase the number of DBT-trained staff to ensure consistent and effective skill-building for youth. During this quarter, we assigned a DBT trainer to CYDC with the goal of training, observation and modeling on all staff on all units. This will be duplicated at BCJJC and Hickey in the coming quarter.

Next quarter, we will be introducing Rewire CBT by Roca in our staff secure treatment facilities. Rewire CBT is a seven-skill cognitive behavioral theory (CBT) approach designed for frontline staff to help young people learn and practice the lifesaving skills they need to heal from trauma and increasingly make healthier choices. This exposes youth to CBT skills they are used in our community programs, creating a continuum of learned skills.

The Parent Support Group continues to provide a valuable forum for parents, guardians, and families to connect, share resources, and receive support. This monthly gathering offers a safe space for caregivers to discuss their experiences and ask questions related to their children's involvement with the department. The events and activities have been well received by families, who are participating in significant numbers.

#### *Other updates*

During this reporting period, facilities focused on safety, staffing, mental health and programming. Facility leadership held sessions to review policies, best practices and trends, and worked closely with behavioral health contracted staff and DJS clinical staff to address the increased acute needs of the youth we serve through effective crisis intervention training; Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS); more mental health therapeutic interventions; offering more internal and external training opportunities; maintaining strong security protocols and increasing safety measures proactively and in response to incidents; and expanding collaboration with community partners.

Residential services have 15 youth successfully participating in the YOLO Work Program (Youth Opportunity Learning Occupations) working both on site and in the community. The YOLO program is designed to provide youth with valuable work experience, skills, healthy work habits and compensation. Youth across residential services also participated in numerous activities and events to include family engagements, youth/staff basketball games and facility vs. facility competitive sport competitions event, a BMX bike show, and an Olympic style event, where the youth and staff displayed outstanding sportsmanship, received medals and strengthened staff and youth rapport.

DJS is also pleased to share the following incident and population related data, collected by DJS' Office of Research and Evaluation. Note that DJS believes critical incident rates will improve over time as the work of the agency's Facility Innovation Teams and other facility reform efforts progress.

DJS prefers to examine and analyze incidents by calculating the rate of incidents per 100 youth days. This is a standard method of measuring a rate of incidents allowing for meaningful comparison between facilities of different populations and changes to a facility population over time. DJS finds this method to be more useful than looking simply at a count of incidents that does not truly allow for comparison across time or among facilities due to changes.

Likewise, DJS notes that it is important to look at trends over longer times, however, DJS populations and programming often change considerably so it may be more meaningful to compare the current quarter to the one just prior in order to allow for a more **direct** comparison. Since both short-term and long-term trends are useful for different purposes, both are presented below.

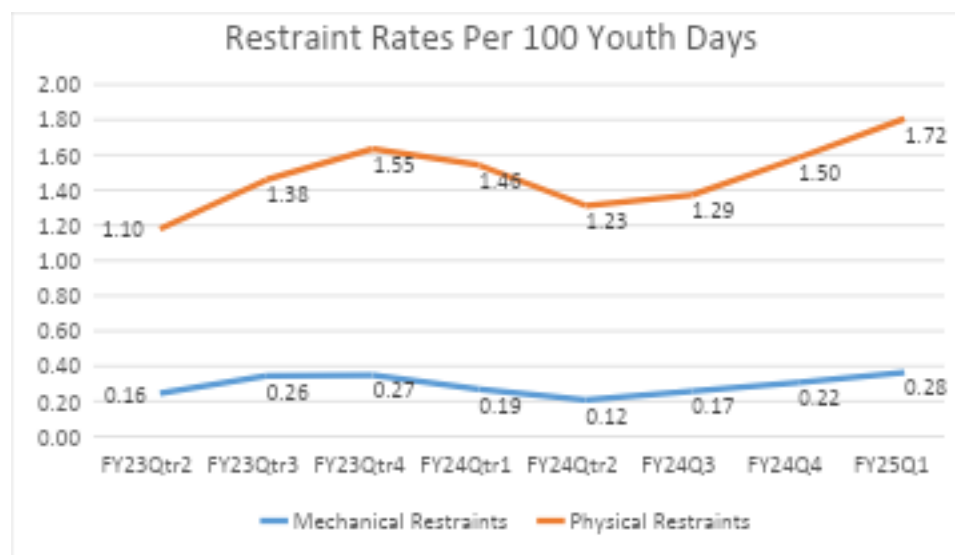
The table below presents the past two quarters of data, showing incident counts and *rates* for detention, committed treatment programs, total state-operated programs, and a breakdown by facility. Discussions of the past two years are added below to present a more complete picture of incidents.

### Key Incident Counts and Rates for the Past Two Quarters at DJS Programs

Incident Count	Mechanical Restraints		Physical Restraints		Seclusions		Youth Fights		Yth on Yth Assaults	
	FY24Q4	FY25Q1	FY24Q4	FY25Q1	FY24Q4	FY25Q1	FY24Q4	FY25Q1	FY24Q4	FY25Q1
<b>Detention</b>										
Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Ctr Detention	6	8	49	70	7	4	8	6	62	73
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.07	0.10	0.57	0.85	0.08	0.05	0.09	0.07	0.72	0.89
Charles Hickey School	8	4	83	71	13	9	16	6	32	40
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.13	0.06	1.32	1.11	0.21	0.14	0.26	0.09	0.51	0.63
Cheltenham Youth Detention Center	11	12	89	89	60	32	19	37	45	32
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.18	0.19	1.45	1.44	0.98	0.52	0.31	0.60	0.73	0.52
Lower Eastern Shore Children's Center	0	2	20	32	1	2	3	7	0	4
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.00	0.11	1.25	1.75	0.06	0.11	0.19	0.38	0.00	0.22
Western Maryland Children's Center	17	15	63	71	8	5	10	7	10	13
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	1.25	1.34	4.65	6.36	0.59	0.45	0.74	0.63	0.74	1.16
<b>Total Detention Incident Count</b>	42	41	304	333	89	52	56	63	149	162
<i>Detention Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.18	0.17	1.27	1.40	0.37	0.22	0.23	0.27	0.62	0.68
<b>Committed Programs</b>										
Backbone Mountain Youth Center	12	10	54	57	N/A	N/A	6	7	3	10
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.51	0.44	2.31	2.50	N/A	N/A	0.26	0.31	0.13	0.44
Green Ridge Youth Center	9	22	88	107	N/A	N/A	13	6	16	8
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.35	0.92	3.43	4.46	N/A	N/A	0.51	0.25	0.62	0.33
Victor Cullen Center	6	13	21	30	2	3	4	3	7	11
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.26	0.59	0.91	1.37	0.09	0.14	0.17	0.14	0.30	0.50
<b>Total Committed Incident Count</b>	27	45	163	194	2	3	23	16	26	29
<i>Committed Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.38	0.65	2.26	2.82	0.03	0.04	0.32	0.23	0.36	0.42
<b>Total (Detention &amp; Committed)</b>										
Total State-Operated Incident Count	69	86	467	527	91	55	79	79	175	191
<i>Rate Per 100 Youth Days</i>	0.22	0.28	1.50	1.72	0.29	0.18	0.25	0.26	0.56	0.62

### Data and Trends by Quarter

#### Restraints



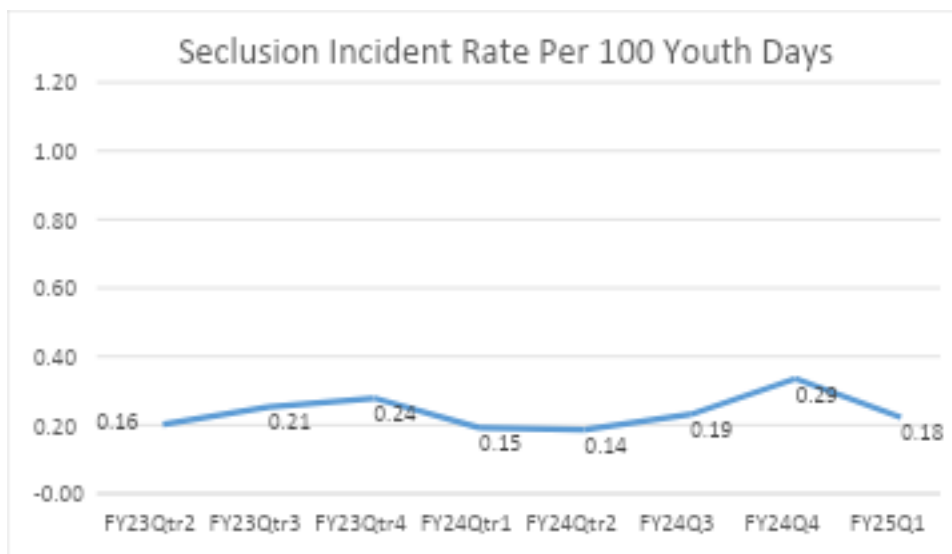
Looking over the longer term of two years:

- Mechanical restraints remain consistently less common than physical restraints and the rates have varied very little over this time period.
- Rates for physical restraints fluctuated more and saw an overall increase.

Over the last two quarters where populations would be more comparable:

- Mechanical Restraints
  - Statewide overall rates have increased.
  - The overall rate per 100 youth days decreased for detention programs and increased in the committed treatment programs.
    - Rates increased at BCJJC, Cheltenham, and LESCC.
    - Rates decreased at Backbone.
- Physical Restraints
  - Statewide overall rates increased
  - The overall rate per 100 youth days increased for both detention programs and committed treatment programs.
    - The only facilities that saw a decrease in the rate of physical restraint incidents per 100 youth days were Hickey and Cheltenham.

## Seclusions

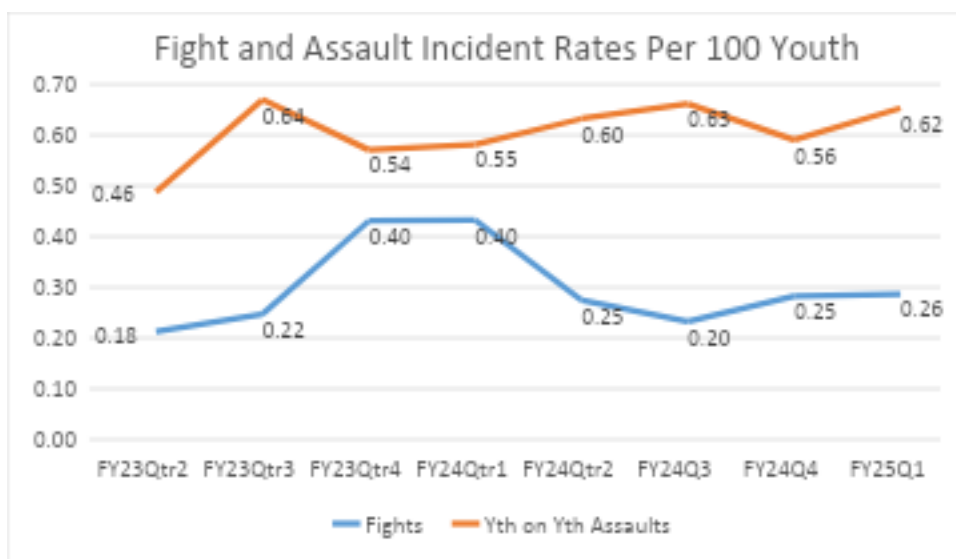


The use of seclusion is uncommon overall and has been relatively flat over the past two years with a decrease between the last two quarters. Fluctuations in rates over time are primarily attributable to detention facilities.

While the overall seclusion incident rate per 100 youth days in detention decreased over the last two quarters, rates increased at LESCO.

Also important to note is that VCC is the only committed treatment program to report any incidents of seclusion over the two years shown. During this time period, there were two quarters during which VCC also reported 0 seclusions.

### **Fights and Youth on Youth Assaults:**



Looking by quarter over the two-year period statewide (detention and treatment programs):

- The rate of fight incidents remains consistently lower than the rate of assault incidents.
- Overall increases were seen in incident rates per 100 youth days for both fights and assaults.

Over the last two quarters:

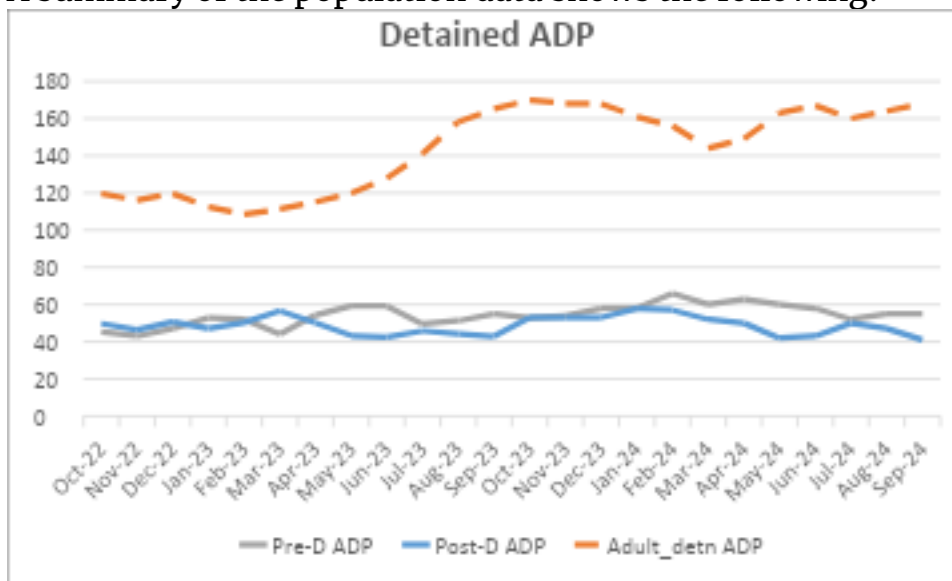
- Fights
  - o Statewide overall rates increased
  - o Rates have increased overall in detention and decreased in treatment programs.
    - A few detention facilities saw rates for fights decrease. Rate per 100 youth days decreased at BCJJC, Hickey, and Western Maryland Children's Center.



- Rates per 100 youth days increased at Backbone.
- Youth on Youth Assaults
  - Statewide overall rates increased
  - Rates have increased overall in detention and treatment programs.
    - Two individual facilities saw exceptions to the overall increase in rates. Rates per 100 youth days decreased at Cheltenham and at Green Ridge.

## Population Data

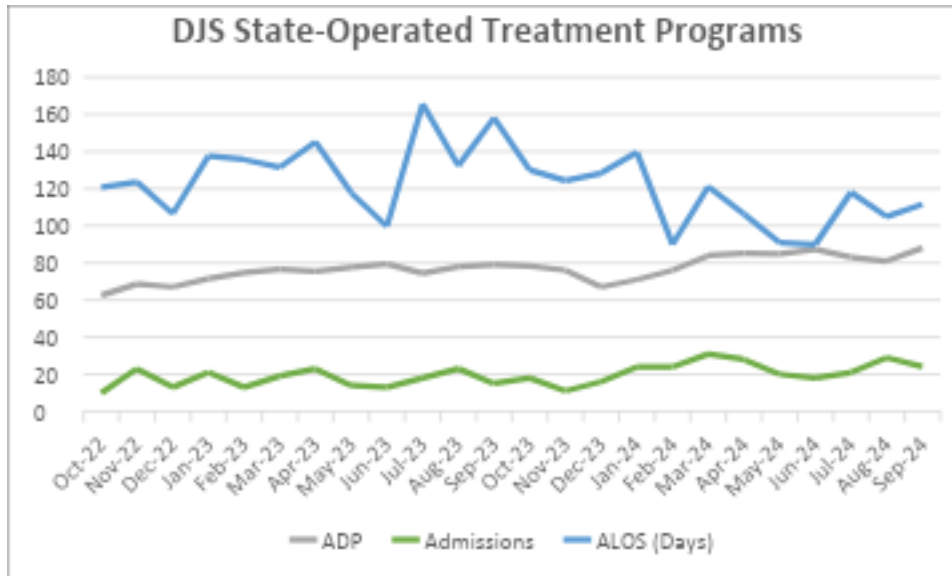
A summary of the population data shows the following:



By examining the last two years of population data, it is evident that the rise in the overall detention average daily population (ADP) is heavily impacted by the adult hold ADP. ADP for this group is consistently higher than the other groups and continues to increase overall. Pre-D ADP increased over the span of the two years shown, while Post-D ADP decreased.

Between October 2022 and September 2024:

- ADP for the adult population increased 40.5%
- Post-D ADP decreased 17.7%
- Pre-Disposition ADP increased 21.5%.



ALOS decreased overall during the two-year period shown but increased between August and September 2024. Admissions and ADP have both seen an overall increase since October 2022.

- ALOS has decreased overall over the two-year period though it did vary during this span. It was at its 2-year low in February and June of 2024.
- Admissions have seen an overall increase since their low in October 2022 and a decrease during the last two months.
- ADP has increased over the two-year span reaching its highest point in September 2024.

The Department will further review JJMU’s 2024 3rd Quarter report to integrate into DJS’ work plans.

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 (JSEP) – RESPONSE**

## JSEP Response to the 2024 Third Quarter JJMU Report

JSEP assumed operational control of all schools located within DJS facilities on July 1, 2022, and remains committed to working to provide the best educational experience for our students. JSEP's academic program aligns with all Maryland state-mandated standards and JSEP offers an academically rigorous curriculum on par with the education program the student would be receiving in their home LEA. Additionally, students benefit from Individualized Education Plans, initiated when a student enters a JSEP school, which tailors their educational goals to their unique strengths, talents, and interests. JSEP students also benefit from small class sizes, good relationships with their teachers, and regular attendance. Overall, JSEP students return to the communities more engaged in their educational goals as a result of having experienced success and having a voice in their own education while in a JSEP school.

### Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center

During the third quarter of 2024, the teacher vacancy rate for JSEP school staff at BCJJC went from 33% on July 1<sup>st</sup> to 29% on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Current vacancies at BCJJC include math, science, CTE, social studies, a school librarian, and a PE teacher. Teacher vacancies across the United States remain a pressing issue in 2024, with many states reporting shortages at varying scales. Factors contributing to these vacancies include lower enrollment in teacher preparation programs and challenging working conditions. BCJJC's vacancies are particularly concerning as BCJJC is the largest of the JSEP schools, affecting the largest number of students. Fortunately, the virtual school at Garrett continues to provide education delivered by highly qualified teachers to all BCJJC students. JSEP and the Board continue to collaborate with the Human Resource Department to find creative ways to attract teachers to DJS facilities. They are also continuing their work on solutions, some requiring legislative action and others achievable without statutory changes. Overall, JSEP's school-based vacancy rate during the third quarter of 2024 dropped from 21% on July 1<sup>st</sup> to 11% on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Since assuming control of the schools, JSEP has expanded post-secondary opportunities for students both in the areas of college courses and vocational technology opportunities. JSEP currently has MOA with nine community colleges and universities which provide credit bearing and work-based learning opportunities. JSEP has invested heavily in other programs for post-secondary students through grant funding. JSEP has purchased and deployed virtual reality headsets that allow student opportunities for career exploration, training, and certifications. Post-secondary students have access to Xello allowing them additional career exploration and job seeking and job securing skills. Post-secondary students have access to six online certification programs and specialized programs in the placement sites. JSEP has software in all schools, which allows students who are interested in credit bearing courses to prepare for necessary placement tests. Counselors are on hand in all schools to help post-secondary students with financial aid forms and college applications, which JSEP will pay for, to ensure the students are ready to achieve their goals when they return to their

communities. These post-secondary opportunities are available to all students across all JSEP schools.

JSEP will begin implementing a system to support students' transitioning to post-secondary education. Once students are confirmed as post-secondary students, they meet with their school counselor and the CTE coordinator to review and revise their educational and career goals as outlined in their Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). Together, they develop a comprehensive long-term post-secondary plan.

The school plans activities to align with each student's goals and makes relevant classes or programs available. As part of this process, students are required to create a daily schedule and share it with school personnel. This schedule serves multiple purposes: it provides structure for the student, enables staff to offer targeted support, and acts as a tool for mutual accountability between the student and staff.

### Charles H. Hickey School

JSEP school vacancies at CHHS dropped from 25% on July 1, 2024, to 8% on October 1, 2024. The Hickey School currently has vacancies for an English and social studies teacher.

GED testing across JSEP is offered on demand across all JSEP schools. As soon as a student is ready and has met all the requirements, such as parental permission, the student applies for and is administered the GED. JSEP has two full-time GED administrators with mobile labs with multiple GED computers ensuring accessibility and efficiency.

### Victor Cullen Center

The JJMU report notes that the on-grounds school hosted a successful parent-teacher event, and two students graduated during the reporting period. The school continues making strides working with identified students who meet the GED criteria and ensuring students achieve academic growth while they are at Victor Cullen. These goals are supported by their active parent engagement and graduation ceremonies and new initiatives to more fully engage parents. These initiatives include access to student's daily grades, virtual parent-teacher conferences, college and career fairs which include parents, and continued parent engagement events.

### Green Ridge Youth Center

JSEP, along with the DJS Human Resources team, are working on some new options to attract teachers to fill the one vacancy at Green Ridge that remained unfilled during the third quarter.

## General Response

JSEP has noted the emphasis on family engagement throughout this quarter's report. JSEP is in full agreement that family engagement is beneficial to students, but also essential in terms of academic progress. JSEP has made family engagement central to the operations of the JSEP schools. During the third quarter, the schools hosted 18 family engagement events: BCJJC (2); BMYC (1); CYDC (6); GRYC (2); CHHC (1); LESCC (4); VCC (2). JSEP continues to make PowerSchool access available to parents to view student grades in real time, to send a welcoming packet including the JSEP student handbook to each newly enrolled student's family, and to make regular home contacts to keep families involved in a student's educational progress.

JSEP continues to monitor the progress being made with supplemental agreements through DBM, which will enable JSEP to provide stipends for the JSEP clubs. JSEP is hopeful that they will begin offering these popular activities again soon.