



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

**FOURTH QUARTER REPORT
AND 2023 ANNUAL REVIEW**

The 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 significant time gathering information and observing all aspects of operations. We sit in on activities and classes, interview youth, staff and administrators, and review video 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 2022) are included within the 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 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 Fourth Quarter Report and 2023 Annual 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 fourth quarter 2023 reports and an annual calendar year 2023 review.

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

The JJMU Fourth Quarter Report and 2023 Annual Review Compendium was produced by Margi Joshi, Nick Moroney, Tim Snyder, and Marvin Stone. Thanks to Taran Henley, Fritz Schantz, and Maria Welker for technical assistance.

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 through our website at:

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



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

April 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, Members of the General Assembly, Secretary Schiraldi, and State Advisory Board Members:

This report offers descriptions of events and of services at Maryland Department of Juvenile Services' (DJS') operated detention and placement facilities during calendar year 2023. The report also includes comparative data concerning calendar years 2023 and 2022.

In recent years, the Department has made significant efforts to improve conditions of confinement for incarcerated youth under its care. However, DJS facilities are still modeled after a punitive and compliance-oriented approach, and resources to help young people and their families overcome challenges and thrive need to be prioritized. Providing individualized and effective services for youth has been further complicated by a sizeable increase in the average daily population of young people incarcerated in DJS facilities over the past year.

Please see the section of this report entitled “Services and Care Inside DJS Facilities” for more detailed information.

Instead of increasing reliance on DJS-operated facilities, the State of Maryland should concentrate more effort on utilizing community-based organizations that can intervene early and effectively by providing support and resources to impede the cycling of youth ever deeper into the justice system.

If we want to keep crime down and decrease recidivism rates, we must invest in all of our communities and ensure that they are properly resourced.

Respectfully submitted,

Nick Moroney

Nick Moroney
Director
Maryland Juvenile Justice Monitoring Unit

Cc: Attorney General Anthony Brown
Chief Deputy Attorney General Candace McLaren Lanham
Deputy Attorney General Carolyn Quattrocki
State of Maryland Treasurer’s Office
The Office of the Comptroller of Maryland
Deputy Secretary Antonia Reason, Mr. Karl Pothier, Mr. Marc Schindler, DJS
Margi Joshi, Tim Snyder and Marvin Stone, JJMU

JUVENILE JUSTICE MONITORING UNIT FOURTH QUARTER REPORT AND 2023 ANNUAL REVIEW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INCIDENT AND POPULATION TRENDS	7
SERVICES AND CARE INSIDE DJS FACILITIES	8
COVID-19 RESPONSE IN JUVENILE SERVICES' FACILITIES	20
DETENTION CENTERS	23
Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center	24
Cheltenham Youth Detention Center.....	28
Charles H. Hickey, Jr., School	34
Thomas J.S. Waxter Children's Center.....	38
Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center	39
Lower Eastern Shore Children's Center	40
Western Maryland Children's Center	42
COMMITTED PLACEMENT CENTERS	45
Victor Cullen Center.....	46
Garrett Children's Center.....	49
Youth Centers X2.....	50
Silver Oak Academy.....	54
SMALLER FACILITY UPDATES	55
DJS RESPONSE	58
JSEP RESPONSE	63

DJS Hardware Secure Detention

DJS Committed Placement

Pre-disposition/pending placement

- Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC)
- Cheltenham Youth Detention Center (CYDC)
- Charles H. Hickey, Jr., School (Hickey)
- Thomas J.S. Waxter Children's Center (Waxter)
[closed in March of 2022]
- Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center (Noyes)
[temporarily closed since October 2022]
- Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC)

Post-disposition

- Victor Cullen Center (Cullen)
- Garrett Children's Center (GCC)
[temporarily closed]
- Backbone Mountain and Green Ridge youth centers (two youth centers)
- Silver Oak Academy (SOA) [DJS licensed]

Incident and Population Trends

Calendar year 2023 population and incident trends versus 2022:

- ✓ Physical restraints decreased in committed placement at LESCC and WMCC detention centers.
- ✓ The use of mechanical restraints decreased in detention at Hickey.
- ✓ The use of seclusion decreased in detention at WMCC and LESCC.
- Average daily populations (ADP) of youth increased at all currently open DJS detention centers and at all DJS-operated committed placement centers.
- Youth on youth fights and assaults increased at all currently open DJS secure detention centers and all DJS-operated committed placement centers.
- Physical restraints increased in detention at CYDC and Hickey and in committed placement at the two youth centers and Cullen.
- Mechanical restraint usage inside facilities increased in secure detention at CYDC, LESCC, and WMCC and in committed placement at the two youth centers and Cullen.
- Seclusions increased in secure detention at CYDC and Hickey and in committed placement at Cullen.
- There were 95 incidents involving suicide ideation, one suicide attempt, and 38 incidents of self-injurious behavior at DJS-operated facilities in 2023.

Services and Care Inside DJS Facilities

Services and Care Inside DJS Facilities

In recent years the Department has made significant efforts to improve conditions of confinement for incarcerated youth under its care. However, DJS facilities are still modeled after a punitive and compliance-oriented approach, and resources to help young people and their families overcome challenges and thrive need to be prioritized. Providing individualized and effective services for youth has been increasingly difficult because of the sizeable population increases of young people incarcerated in Maryland over the last year (2023).

The topics below highlight areas of concern to incarcerated young people and include progress made to improve the treatment and services provided to youth in custody and recommendations to build on existing and ongoing facility reforms.

Basic Needs: Why It's Important

Clothes, shoes and hairstyles are means by which adolescents express autonomy and identity. Soap, deodorant, and toothpaste are basic hygiene items that are necessary to maintain cleanliness and reduce body odor for youth living in close quarters. Access to nourishing and nutritious food supports healthy human development. Care and attention to providing youth with these basic necessities help youth feel respected and safe. DJS detention centers and placement sites can recognize the dignity, worth and humanity of young people by providing them access to adequate amounts of effective hygiene products, expanded hair care services, higher quality uniforms, and flavorful and plentiful food.

Concerns about Basic Needs

- Clothing, shoes, and hygiene products issued to youth are purchased from a prison supply company and are of poor quality and heavily rationed. Clothes and shoes wear down or tear easily and hygiene products can be ineffective and, at times, lead to skin rashes and other dermatological issues. In addition, the issuance of body wash is heavily controlled by DJS staff, and some facilities do not provide enough soap during shower time for youth to adequately wash themselves. Youth must earn access to name-brand hygiene products through the Department's behavioral compliance program.
- Since inventory is so tightly controlled by DJS staff, receipt of basic items is dependent on the attentiveness and responsiveness of staff members responsible for the issuance of facility supplies. There are often delays in kids receiving new or replacement clothing and hygiene items, and this issue is chronic and on-going at Victor Cullen. At CYDC (Cheltenham), many kids were

not provided with thermals for several weeks in 2023, despite cold temperatures outside and inside the facility.

- Unlike girls in the system, boys do not receive styling products and tools to maintain hair styles such as locs, twists, dreads, and braids, and youth who assist their peers with hair maintenance are subject to disciplinary infractions. Stylist care is consistently requested by youth at Cheltenham who say they would like to maintain their appearance.
- Hair removal is a practice in many girls' regular hygiene routines, yet incarcerated girls are prohibited from having access to hair removal tools or products.

Progress with the Provision of Basic Needs

- ✓ Smaller facilities such as Lower Eastern Shore Detention Center (LESCC) and Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC) detention centers are better able to manage inventory and provide youth with items in a timely and more individualized manner.
- ✓ In acknowledgment of the poor-quality shoes, some facilities with responsive leadership provide higher quality shoes to youth during recreation time. However, this practice is not consistent and also not universal across all DJS facilities.
- ✓ BCJCC and Hickey detention centers both have programs that allow access to hair care services for youth with varying or alternative hair styles.
- ✓ After complaints from youth about being hungry due to inadequate food portions and requests from monitors and other advocates to provide more food to youth, DJS increased the food portions that youth are allowed to receive during their evening meal.
- Youth were provided some autonomy by being able to choose the dinner meal one day a month and youth requests for more fresh food were accommodated by providing young people with the options to replace their evening meal with a salad.

Medical Care: Why It's Important

Incarcerated youth have a legal right to adequate health care. Health researchers have noted that “a majority of juveniles that enter custody have unmet health needs...including injury, problems with vision or hearing, or other illness.”¹ Rates of traumatic injury, dental problems, and sexually transmitted diseases are also high and “many youth also have multiple physical, mental, and behavioral health disorders.”² Girls have unique reproductive health needs and incarcerated pregnant girls require pre-natal health care including frequent check-ups.

Progress with Medical Care

- ✓ The Department has a highly experienced medical director who successfully navigated DJS facilities, their staff and youth through the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Concerns about Medical Care

- Youth housed in a facility infirmary do not consistently get access to in-person education and their participation in recreation and in facility events is minimal. They report frequent boredom and restlessness from having to be in the medical unit all day.
- There is no nursing supervisor on site at Cheltenham.
- Girls lack access to a facility with an infirmary.
- Young people at BCJJC submitting sick calls reported delays in getting seen by a provider for their medical issues. (This issue is being addressed and the situation is improved at time of writing).
- Finding nursing staff that can provide trauma-informed and culturally responsive care to young people is a challenge and has been exacerbated by a nationwide shortage of health care workers since the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ Acoca, Leslie, Stephens, Jessica, and Van Vleet, Amanda, “Juveniles in Residential Placement Detention Center Private Health Coverage and Care for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: The Role of Medicaid and CHIP” Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured (May 2014), available at: <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/8591-health-coverage-and-care-for-youth-in-the-juvenile-justice-system.pdf>

² Ibid.

Mental Health Care: Why It's Important

The majority of young people in the juvenile justice system are youth of color who have been exposed to trauma, and mental health disorders are highly prevalent among justice-involved youth. In addition, the experience of incarceration can be inherently traumatizing and can both create (and worsen existing) behavioral and mental health problems. Comprehensive trauma-informed and culturally competent mental health care is an essential component to healing and growth.

Progress with Mental Health Care

- ✓ DJS has mental health clinicians in all facilities to meet with youth. Department policy requires that clinicians meet with youth after being involved in incidents involving aggression or self-harm and conduct periodic check-ins with youth on seclusion. Clinicians also assess for suicidality and can develop care plans for youth facing reoccurring behavioral health challenges. However, the quality and implementation of such plans are highly dependent on provider experience, expertise, and the coordination of care among providers, facility administration, staff and youth.
- ✓ DJS implemented a comprehensive treatment model modeled after the tenets of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy. Youth in committed placement have individual assigned therapists that they meet with to help them meet their treatment goals.
- ✓ Because so many young people in Maryland are “automatically charged as adults” and because of a shortage of committed placement bed space amid the periodic occurrence of Covid infections, youth often spend several months in detention waiting for court decisions or for their treatment time to begin. Young people refer to this period as “dead time” and are frustrated by the delays. To help address the issue, DJS implemented pending placement units at two large and one smaller youth detention center – Cheltenham Youth Detention Center (CYDC), Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC) and Lower Shore Children’s Center (LESCC) - to allow youth to receive treatment hours as they await bed space at a placement facility. As an added benefit, the detention centers are closer to most youth families which affords more opportunity for family involvement in a child’s treatment.

Concerns about Mental Health Care

- Filling mental health personnel vacancies has been a challenge throughout DJS facilities. Backbone Youth Center has two vacancies for mental health professionals and there is a shortage of mental health staff across all DJS placement sites where youth treatment hours and progress dictate the length of youth stay. Green Ridge Youth Center and Victor Cullen faced difficulties in hiring and retaining qualified mental health professionals in 2023. There are also severe shortages of mental health clinicians at Western Maryland Children's Center, currently an all-girls detention center that also houses girls committed to the Department to receive services.
- The three largest detention centers (Baltimore City Juvenile Detention Center, Cheltenham Youth Detention Center, and the Hickey detention center in Baltimore County) have mental health services supplied onsite but through an outside vendor contracted by the Department. Services provided by the vendor are limited in scope and mainly consist of debriefing with youth after incidents occur and checking on youth per seclusion protocols in accordance with DJS policy. Clinicians are only required to meet with young people a limited number of times per month as stipulated in the terms of the contract. Occasionally, mental health providers conduct group therapy on the units. Contracts with outside vendors should be adequate both in scope and level of services to ensure that youth are receiving appropriate mental health care. Vendors should also demonstrate that they can provide youth access to culturally competent clinicians with expertise in working with justice-involved youth.
- Youth with severe mental and behavioral health issues continue to be inappropriately sent to DJS detention and DJS placement centers. The Department does not have the resources or expertise to provide specialized mental health services and these young people would be better served by community-based mental health treatment centers that are able to provide intensive mental health treatment. It is often the case that incarceration further exacerbates youth mental health conditions.
- There is a critical but unmet need for intensive in-patient and out-patient substance abuse treatment programs for young people facing challenges in Maryland.

- Girls lack options for in-state residential treatment services. There is no staff secure committed placement facility for girls and the hardware secure placement option consists of a unit inside a detention center.

Education: Why It Matters

Educational opportunities have been shown to reduce recidivism and contribute to positive youth outcomes. Youth are entitled to receive the same level of education services while incarcerated that they received in community schools.

Progress with Education

- ✓ An independent Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) Board, focused solely on education in DJS facilities, took over responsibility of education services inside DJS facilities in June of 2022. The education program receives implementation and resource assistance from DJS.
- ✓ Young people have more access to books and reading material than ever before in DJS facilities and on-site library catalogs have been expanded.
- ✓ Extra-curricular programming is being provided through after-school clubs. All students are eligible to participate based on interest.
- ✓ DJS, in collaboration with JSEP, is working to improve transition services for the young people leaving DJS facilities.

Concerns about Education

- There continues to be a large number of teacher vacancies in DJS schools, and recruitment and retention of highly qualified education personnel is difficult because many surrounding school districts pay more and provide more holidays than DJS schools which run year-round.
- High quality teachers and positive student-teacher relationships can greatly impact student engagement and academic achievement. Some students report that they do not feel supported by some teachers and others report that they are not challenged by classroom work. Education administrators are working on improving the quality of classroom instruction and continue to concentrate on increasing student engagement in DJS schools.

- School centers on the provision of six hours of classes each weekday in core subjects in DJS-operated detention and placement centers. Some youth ask for physical education and art classes to be included in school offerings in order to provide more opportunity for physical activity and break up the monotony of the school day. Many youth want more emphasis to be placed on the provision of career and technical education for the duration of their time with DJS.
- Additionally, some mental health professionals working in the placement centers have complained that there is not enough time left over after school hours each day to provide effective individualized treatment for youth.

Family Engagement: Why It Matters

Family engagement and family contact improves academic and behavioral outcomes for youth. Connecting with family members is an important coping strategy that helps many youth deal with the stressors of incarceration.

Progress with Family Engagement

- ✓ In recent years, DJS has greatly expanded in-person visitation opportunities by allowing parents to visit their child any day of the week as long as the family schedules the visit at least one day in advance with facility case management. The previous DJS administration also provided video calls to youth in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, video calls were discontinued by the current DJS administration in November of 2023 at both DJS detention and DJS placement centers. For many youth detained or placed far from home, video calls are the only opportunity to see their families.
- ✓ Prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency, facilities were providing monthly family engagement events for youth and their parents. Many facilities have begun offering more frequent family engagement activities since the end of the public health emergency. This trend should continue, and family engagement events should be increased to at least monthly as was the practice before the COVID-19 restrictions went into place. In addition, family engagement events should be open to the families of all kids at all facilities.

Concerns with Family Engagement

- Unlike the regionalized DJS detention centers, DJS placement centers are located in remote areas far from the majority of incarcerated youths' families and communities which makes it difficult for many families to visit. As mentioned above, video calls were one of the only means by which many families could see their child, however the Department took away virtual calls for all youth (in both detention and placement facilities).
- Only immediate family members (legal guardians, mother, father, siblings 16 and older) are automatically placed on a youth's visitation list. Young people must request special visits to meet with their children, extended family, or supportive adults in their lives. The process to obtain special visits may take several weeks and depends on the responsiveness of case management staff (both in the facility and in the community). Requests are frequently not followed up on and, at other times, only accommodated because of consistent pressure by monitors and other advocates. The Department should proactively assess a youth's support network early on and these individuals (after vetting) should be placed on the child's visitation and telephone list.
- Aside from visitation, the primary means of contact incarcerated youth have with their families is through telephone calls. Phones are placed in common areas on the living units and both the phone itself and the phone service are provided by a prison-use telecommunications corporation (Global Tel Link). All calls are recorded (apart from those to pre-registered legal counsel) and phone conversations and records are subject to request and subpoena by law enforcement. Additionally, technical and service-related issues with the GTL phones are a reoccurring problem and a source of frustration for incarcerated young people and their families. The GTL phones malfunction and break frequently and the quality or clarity of the phone connection is often poor.

Job Training and Readiness: Why It Matters

Most incarcerated youth are eager to participate in career and technical education courses and hands-on learning programs which will provide them with the skills and experience needed to enter the workforce. Youth interests include barbering, cosmetology, construction, mechanics, culinary arts, and nursing. Vocational training dovetails well with classroom instruction as “[r]esearch suggests.... that blended approaches with literacy and numeracy taught in combination or in the context of

occupational training or employment are likely to produce the best outcomes, since participants can see the connections between the classroom and the workplace.”³

Progress with Job Training and Readiness

- ✓ The Department developed a partnership with other state agencies, including as the Department of Natural Resources which allows eligible high school graduates at DJS placement sites to gain valuable work experience in nearby communities for three days a week (provided that DJS has the staff available to escort youth off grounds). The program – named YOLO (Youth Opportunities Learning Occupations) – is the most significant and meaningful employment-related programming for young people incarcerated in DJS placement sites in many years.
- ✓ Cheltenham has partnered with a local education non-profit to provide computer coding classes to youth.
- ✓ Youth in committed placement at Backbone Youth Center can attend community college courses in-person provided that their stay corresponds to the semester schedule. An introductory welding course has been popular among recent high school graduates.
- ✓ Several Maryland community colleges have agreements with facility schools to provide online community college courses to post-secondary students. Students sometimes face hurdles taking online courses when incarcerated because their access to computers with a connection to course lectures and materials is highly dependent on staffing and resource availability.

Concerns with Job Training and Readiness

- Workforce development opportunities leading to certifications and credentials for in-demand jobs that pay well and can lead to economic independence and so need to be expanded. Opportunities for employment, volunteering, and interning in local communities should be arranged.

³ O’Sullivan, K., Spangler, D., Showalter, T., & Bennett, R. (2020). Job Training for Youth with Justice Involvement: A Toolkit. National Youth Employment Coalition, page 4, available at: https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/NYEC_JJ_Toolkit_2020.pdf

- Transition services should ensure that youth leaving detention or placement are provided supports which allow them to continue high school and post-secondary education progress. Youth should also be linked up with community-based organizations to assist with connections to employment and career training resources.

Programming: Why It Matters

Keeping youth actively engaged in a variety of structured pro-social activities both inside and outside DJS' placement facilities (prison equivalent) and DJS' secure detention centers (jail equivalent) can help young people build new skills and competencies and remedy the monotony and boredom that is the norm in carceral institutions.

Progress with Programming

- ✓ The new DJS administration is encouraging more off-site activities for youth in committed placement, including more outdoor outings which take advantage of the natural resources of the surrounding areas in which the placement centers are located.
- ✓ Reflections, an experiential learning weekend program run by DJS with both indoor and outdoor elements, has been expanded to include detained youth as well as youth in committed placement. However, staffing needs to be bolstered to ensure availability.
- ✓ The DJS-led CHAMPS (Changing Habits and Making Positive Strides) program provides sports competitions, literary and arts programs, and cultural activities. However, only a select number of youth can participate in events and youth must earn the opportunity by demonstrating behavioral compliance. Additionally, adult-hold youth in DJS detention centers are prohibited from travelling to event sites (even to other secure facilities) unless approval is provided by DJS headquarters administration.⁴

⁴ See DJS CHAMPS program at: <https://djs.maryland.gov/Pages/champs.aspx>

Concerns with Programming

- Excessive downtime is still an issue at DJS detention and placement facilities where youth spend most of after school and weekend hours playing cards, doing puzzles, playing board games, and watching TV.
- Youth placed far from home in DJS placement facilities frequently ask for activities involving community engagement and say they experienced more community contact while being held in detention centers. More effort needs to be made at the youth centers and Victor Cullen to partner with community groups to bring in culturally responsive and relevant programming for youth.
- While some youth at Backbone Mountain Youth Center do have some opportunities to work with Habitat for Humanity off grounds, much more needs to be done to ensure committed youth have regular volunteer opportunities in local communities as and more recreational and educational outings - all are essential elements of treatment and should be incorporated into planning and scheduling at all DJS placement centers.
- Participation in events and programs are often behavior-based, leaving many youth in need of the most intensive support (those who struggle with emotional regulation if there is too much idle time) without meaningful and consistent positive engagement. Programming options open to all kids should be expanded at all DJS facilities.

COVID-19 Response in Juvenile Services' Facilities

COVID-19 Response in Juvenile Services' Facilities

Despite the end of the Federal COVID-19 public health emergency in May of 2023, COVID-19 continues to disrupt the lives of incarcerated youth locked inside DJS facilities.

- New arrivals to the larger DJS detention centers are required to spend one to three days isolated in their cells (medical isolation) as they await the results of COVID-19 tests which are administered upon admission. Youth who test negative are allowed out of their cells and are housed on a quarantine unit for several days where they do not receive access to in-person school services or to regular programming offered to youth in general population. When infection persists, youth have to wait weeks or even a month or more before being moved to a general population housing unit. Youth frequently report boredom and restlessness while on quarantine units or in medical isolation, and mental health services and coping mechanisms, such as access to movies, games, books, stress balls, journals and structured activities, are not consistently provided.
- Youth testing positive for COVID-19 are placed in medical isolation where they must spend several days locked in their cells.
- If a youth in a general population living unit tests positive for COVID-19, the entire unit is placed on quarantine and subject to the restrictions stated above. Youth on quarantine (even those who have not tested positive and are not symptomatic) are held back from regular programming, such as in-person school, as well as from special event-based programming. For example, due to a prolonged COVID-19 outbreak on a living unit at the Cheltenham youth detention center, youth on the unit were unable to attend the holiday family engagement event during the winter holiday season and spent much of December in quarantine. Holiday periods are a stressful time for incarcerated young people and the lack of access to family due to COVID-19-related restrictions further exacerbated this stress. In addition, the Department chose to take away youth access to virtual calls (which were introduced at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic) immediately prior to the Thanksgiving holiday, so youth did not even have the ability to see their families virtually while on quarantine.

Youth exposed to COVID-19 through another young person, or an infected staff person must wear masks during waking hours.

- There are long waiting lists for DJS placement sites (and non-DJS treatment centers) and committed youth can wait months in detention for a treatment bed to

open up. DJS placement centers - which are located in remote western Maryland - periodically have COVID-19 outbreaks. When in outbreak status, new admissions to the centers are halted, sometimes for several weeks. Outbreaks prolong the already extended period that young people in pending placement status at detention centers must wait to begin receiving treatment services.

- In recognition of the issue of excessive “dead time” where committed youth languish in detention while waiting for services, the Department established a pending placement unit at Baltimore City Detention Center (BCJJC), Cheltenham Youth Detention Center (CYDC), and Lower Eastern Shore Children’s Center (LESCC) for youth awaiting placement at a DJS placement center. Youth on the pending placement units receive treatment services and youth are able to transfer treatment progress (documented by participation in activities and therapy) to their placement site. Pending placement units at regionalized DJS detention centers have the added benefit of being closer to a youth’s family and community than the remotely located DJS placement centers and this affords greater opportunity for sustained family contact and community engagement.

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 beds. Black youth continue to represent the vast majority of youth entries at BCJJC (89% of total entries in 2023 and 90% of total youth entries in 2022).

BCJJC – Selected Incident Categories	2021	2022	2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	37	63	79
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	151	202	293
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	29	19	17
3. Physical Restraint	211	226	192
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	62	62	29
5. Seclusion	72	79	20
6. Contraband	9	23	15
7. Suicide Ideation	11	24	14
8. Suicide Attempt	1	2	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	2	8	0

The average daily population at BCJJC increased by 20% in 2023 compared to 2022, while youth-on-youth incidents of aggression increased by 35%.

There were significantly more incidents involving aggression at BCJJC during 2023 than during 2022, so it is surprising that the Department's reported numbers regarding seclusions and staff utilization of physical and mechanical restraints on youth at BCJJC during 2023 are substantially down compared to 2022. The Department should consider

re-auditing these numbers and related documents and incident footage and should continue to carefully monitor incident reporting at BCJJC to ensure accuracy and compliance with relevant policies.

Youth Safety, Facility Security, and Programming

An experienced DJS manager took over facility operations at BCJJC during the fourth quarter of 2023 and conditions at the facility are slowly improving. Programming options are gradually being expanded. For example, a music room finally became operational for youth use after long-standing delays. Other programming offered to youth during the fourth quarter of 2023 included structured recreation activities, such as pickleball and other sports; unit of the week and unit of the month incentives; ice cream social events; video game tournaments; and a father's group. During the fourth quarter of 2023, family engagement events were scheduled during the holiday period and all youth at the facility and available family members were able to attend.

There are also activities available to youth at BCJJC that are organized through the education department (JSEP), including chess and cooking clubs, and MVA learners' permit classes.

Activities available on weekends need to be expanded as young people report excessive downtime and boredom. Youth also requested more in-person mental health support services during weekends.

In addition to increased coverage for mental health services, enhanced and high-quality mental health and substance abuse services should be provided to youth inside all DJS facilities. There were several instances of youth in possession of vape pens and other contraband at BCJJC during the fourth quarter of 2023 (Incidents 176947 and 176299) and youth were observed by staff to be possibly under the influence of illicit substances based on erratic and uncharacteristic behavior. The influx of suboxone inside facilities is of particular concern across several DJS facilities.

Youth with serious mental health issues are not identified and treated. In Incident 176076, a youth tried to harm himself with a staple but was not placed on suicide watch. Days later, he was able to access cleaning solution, which he consumed. He required emergency medical care.

Medically Vulnerable Youth

Youth on medical isolation reported that they are not provided with items such as books, DVD players, and music players to help them cope with medically mandated cell confinement due to illness. During the fourth quarter of 2023, a youth with a gunshot wound to his hand was observed sitting alone in a dark cell without access to anything to help pass the time.

Consistent access to fresh drinking water was not provided to youth in the infirmary in the beginning of the fourth quarter of 2023. After persistent and numerous monitor complaints, this issue was rectified by the nursing administrator.

Physical Plant Issues

Issues with the physical plant are not addressed in a timely manner. Youth and staff complained of both uncomfortably cold and warm conditions in living units and in the school. Showers periodically run cold within the facility as well. Youth requested blankets for frigid cell temperatures during overnight hours but the request was denied.

Family contact

Increased family contact for incarcerated young people is linked with better youth outcomes both behaviorally and academically.⁵

In November of 2023, administrators at DJS Headquarters made the decision to take away weekly access to video calls and phone calls which were facilitated by case management staff for all youth in DJS custody. Youth are provided with a limited number of (recorded) phone calls to immediate family members through unit phones provided and serviced by a prison telecommunications company (Global Tel Link [GTL]). Service and connection issues with GTL phone lines are common and a major source of frustration for incarcerated youth who are trying to maintain some form of contact with loved ones.

Youth are allowed to purchase video calls through points earned by maintaining positive behavior through the Department's behavior management system, however many youth do not qualify for this incentive and others that do qualify forgo the increased family contact because of the large number of points the calls "cost" which precludes them from getting other incentives to maintain basic living needs such as name-brand hygiene products (which are only available through purchase using behavior system points).

The lack of access to virtual calls is especially problematic for youth who are detained or placed outside of their home jurisdiction and their loved ones are required to travel a far distance to see their child for a maximum of two-hours (the allotted time for visitation).

Education

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was responsible for the delivery of instruction, resources and services for students in the schools within Department of Juvenile Services' (DJS) operated detention and placement facilities until June 28, 2022. At that point, an independent Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) Board focused solely on education in DJS facilities took over responsibility for

⁵ See Vera (February 2016), Identifying, Engaging, and Empowering Families, available at: <https://www.vera.org/publications/identifying-engaging-and-empowering-families-a-charge-for-juvenile-justice-agencies>

education services inside DJS facilities (with implementation and resource assistance from DJS).

The school at BCJJC, in common with other JSEP schools, is plagued by a large number of educator vacancies and this factor hinders the ability of the system to deliver high quality in-person instruction for students. There were vacancies for special education, resource, science, and math teachers at BCJJC during the fourth quarter of 2023.

Young people held in the infirmary are not able to access consistent in-person education instruction and their school day mainly consists of packet work which they must complete on their own.

The availability of reading materials has expanded inside DJS facilities through diligent efforts by the library coordinator at JSEP and through DJS-led partnerships with organizations such as Freedom Reads⁶ which donated bookshelves and books that have been placed on all living units so that young people can have daily access to books.

An after-school chess club and language arts tutoring were offered to students on Sundays during the fourth quarter of 2023.

⁶ To learn more about Freedom Reads, see the organization website available at <https://freedomreads.org/>

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 73% of total youth entries in calendar years 2023 and 2022. Hispanic/Latino youth represented 16% of entries in 2023 compared to 15% in 2022.

CYDC – Selected Incident Categories	2021	2022	2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	28	41	65
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	60	105	231
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	7	20	46
3. Physical Restraint	101	179	288
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	3	20	32
5. Seclusion	21	72	95
6. Contraband	8	17	29
7. Suicide Ideation	7	19	25
8. Suicide Attempt	1	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	11	44	25

Average daily population at CYDC in 2023 increased by 59% when compared to 2022. Incidents also increased substantially during 2023. Comparing the same time period:

- Youth-on-youth fights and assaults increased by 120%.
- Alleged youth-on-staff assaults increased by 130%.
- use of physical restraints increased by 61%.

- use of mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) inside the facility increased by 60%.
- incidents of reported seclusion increased by 32%.
- incidents of suicide ideation increased by 32%.
- incidents involving contraband inside the facility increased by 71%.

Staffing and Severe Operational Shortcomings

The Department has not staffed Cheltenham with an adequate number of direct-care positions given the size of the population, which impacts on the ability of the facility to maintain a safe environment and offer programming for kids. For example, both Hickey detention center and Cheltenham have a rated capacity of 72 youth, yet Hickey is afforded significantly more staff positions to assist in facility operations. Incidents at Cheltenham were high in the fourth quarter of 2023 compared to the Hickey detention center despite both facilities having the same average daily population.

Select Incident Categories	Hickey Q4 2023	CYDC Q4 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	70	70
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	38	64
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	1	16
3. Physical Restraint	42	81
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	2	7
7. Suicide Ideation	7	32

Right sizing the staffing at Cheltenham by increasing the number of positions can increase safety and afford the opportunity for the facility to provide more programming for young people.

Safety and Security

Incidents of aggression were elevated during the fourth quarter of 2023 and contributed to unsafe conditions for youth and staff. Several incidents resulted in significant youth injuries requiring emergency off-grounds medical care and/or continuous monitoring by medical staff.

In Incident 176834, a youth was assaulted by peers on the unit and stomped in the head and face. He was sent to the emergency room for a head injury.

In Incident 176925, a youth with significant mental health issues was screaming throughout the night, tearing up his cell, and talking to himself. He was assaulted by his peers on his living unit who beat him until he fell to the floor and then stomped on his face, head and body while on the ground. He was sent to the emergency room for treatment. The youth's peers reported that they assaulted him to "put the youth in his place" for his "strange behavior". Youth with significant mental health needs continue to be inappropriately housed in detention environments.

In Incident 176695, several youth assaulted another youth, resulting in the targeted youth suffering from a swollen eye, bloody nose, and orbital fracture. He required emergency evaluation and treatment.

In Incident 176891, a youth was assaulted by peers on his unit and hit his head. He was moved to the facility infirmary to be monitored for concussive symptoms.

Group assaults where multiple youth targeted an individual youth (Incidents 176988 and 176955) or separate fights occurring simultaneously and involving multiple youth from the same unit (Incident 177008) were also prevalent during the fourth quarter of 2023.

Unauthorized Use of Seclusion

Department policy mandates that seclusion should only be used when youth present an imminent threat to themselves or others and that periodic check-ins by direct-care and supervisory staff and mental health and medical clinicians be conducted and documented whenever a youth is placed on seclusion. There was a pattern of inappropriate and unreported use of seclusion (where youth are placed on isolation inside a locked cell) at Cheltenham during the fourth quarter of 2023 which was observed and reported by JJMU monitors, DJS child advocates, and the Department's Office of Inspector General (DJS OIG). Violations of the DJS seclusion policy included instances where:

- Youth were locked in cells for hours at a time (both on weekends and school days) when there was not enough staff on the unit to maintain Department mandated staff-to-youth ratios.

- Youth were locked in cells as a response to staff's inability to manage population dynamics on the unit. Staff would require the youth on unit to be locked inside cells for hours at a time as a means of behavior control even when there was no immediate threat to facility safety and security.
- Youth on the same unit who were being kept separate from each other due to past issues (occurring the night or even days before) were observed taking turns being locked in their cells several hours of the day as a method of mediating youth conflict.

Administrators, supervisors, and direct-care staff at CYDC should be extensively trained on DJS seclusion policies and violators of seclusion protocols should be subject to staff accountability measures.

Programming

Cheltenham provides special event programming on a regular basis and excels at forging community partnerships to bring in valuable activities and programs for youth. However, most of these activities are only open to youth who meet behavior requirements set by the facility. Aside from religious services, there are few facility-wide events in which all youth can participate even though youth with more moderate to severe behavioral health challenges often times are ones that benefit most from exposure to pro-social, family engagement and skill-based activities.

For example, Cheltenham held holiday family engagement dinners but only youth who met certain behavior requirements were allowed to participate (unlike at the other larger detention centers, Hickey and BCJJC, where all youth and their families were invited to participate in holiday dinners held during Thanksgiving and the winter holiday period). A little over half of the young people incarcerated at Cheltenham were eligible to attend the winter holiday dinner held in December and, of the eligible group, only a fraction of their families was able to attend the event as it was held at 5 pm on a weekday. The ability to connect with families in-person during the holidays was especially important as the Department took away youth access to virtual calls with loved ones prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. The facility should expand program options that are open to all youth at the facility. Making a concerted effort to engage the entire population in meaningful programming will help lower incidents and aid in the creation of a positive facility culture.

Staffing shortages during the month of December contributed to the inability of the facility to carry out incentive-based programming and undermined youth investment in following facility rules. A "unit of the week" incentive was advertised to youth by administration as a means of promoting group accountability and positive behavior on the living unit. All youth on the living unit are required to maintain positive behavior for the week for a unit to earn the unit of the week designation and receive an outside meal incentive. One of the units that met the requirements and earned the unit of the week

designation did not receive its incentive for over five weeks. By the time the reward was provided, half the kids that earned the prize were no longer housed at the facility. The administration cited a lack of staff as the reason for the facility's inability to fulfill its end of the program requirement.

There is only one full-time on-site recreation specialist during waking hours at Cheltenham. The facility should be provided with another recreation specialist who is able to develop, implement, and supervise programming for youth.

Family Engagement

Administrators at DJS Headquarters made the decision to take away weekly access to video calls, which were facilitated by case management staff, for all youth in DJS custody in November of 2023. Youth are provided with a limited number of (recorded) phone calls to immediate family members through unit phones provided and serviced by a prison telecommunications company (Global Tel Link [GTL]). Service and connection issues with GTL phone lines are common and a major source of frustration for youth who are trying to maintain some form of contact with loved ones outside jail walls.

Youth are also allowed to purchase video calls through points earned by maintaining positive behavior through the Department's behavior management system. However, many youth do not qualify for this incentive and others that do qualify forgo the increased family contact because of the large number of points the calls "cost" which precludes them from getting other incentives to maintain basic living needs such as name-brand hygiene products (which are only available through purchase earned through points).

The lack of access to virtual calls is especially problematic for youth who are detained or placed outside of their home jurisdiction where loved ones are required to travel a far distance to see their child for the maximum two-hour allotment for visitation. A number of boys were displaced from Western Maryland Children's Center when the facility converted to an all-girls detention center, and many ended up at Cheltenham. These youth reported that virtual calls were their only opportunity to see their families whereas when they were detained at WMCC, they were able to have in-person visits with families because the facility was much closer to their home communities.

Medical

Incarcerated youth with chronic health conditions face additional struggles in detention. A young person with diabetes has been placed on the infirmary at Cheltenham for months. He has expressed that he wants to be in general population so he can socialize with his peers, participate in facility events, and attend school during the full school day. Facility administrators report that they do not have enough available staff to bring him to the infirmary from a general population living unit multiple times a day for check-ins and to receive his medication to manage his condition. He has also not been allowed to take brief stints away from the infirmary to recreate with other kids or attend movie nights and similar activities with his peers.

Education

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was responsible for the delivery of instruction, resources and services for students in the schools within Department of Juvenile Services' (DJS) operated detention and placement facilities until June 28, 2022. Starting at the end of June of 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 leadership provided by a new superintendent and implementation and resource assistance provided by DJS.

The school at Cheltenham offered after-school clubs for students to participate in during the fourth quarter of 2023. The after-school clubs were open to all students and participation was based on student interest.

School attendance for students remained an issue throughout the fourth quarter of 2023. There was not enough staff to supervise rotating groups of kids so that if one or more kids refused to go to school, all kids from the unit would have to stay on the living unit for the school day. At time of writing (February of 2024), administrators were working on encouraging school attendance and getting kids to school on time. School attendance and timeliness have significantly improved as a result.

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 beds. Black youth accounted for 84% of entries in calendar year 2023 compared to 80% in 2022.

Hickey – Selected Incident Categories	2021	2022	2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	37	49	60
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	80	162	197
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	6	11	1
3. Physical Restraint	74	170	232
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	6	37	29
5. Seclusion	11	49	58
6. Contraband	8	7	23
7. Suicide Ideation	8	5	8
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	2	5	0

The average daily population of youth at Hickey increased by 22% when comparing 2023 to 2022. During the same time period, youth on youth fights and assaults increased by 21%, physical restraints of youth by staff increased by 36%, and use of seclusion increased by 18%. However, use of mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) inside the facility decreased.

Contraband incidents more than tripled from 2022 to 2023, and the influx of suboxone and other drugs inside facilities is of particular concern across all DJS facilities including Hickey. In Incident 176113, suboxone strip was found in a youth's personal

items during a routine search on a living unit. In Incident 176017, supervisory staff reported that kids on one unit seemed to be under the influence of an illegal substance. In addition, direct-care staff on this unit were observed, on video, allowing a youth to leave his room during overnight hours to make a phone call inside a supervisor's office and walk around the unit and up to individual youth cell doors while he wrote something down on a piece of paper he was carrying. The youth was later found to have a piece of paper on his person indicating a listing of possible youth nicknames and what appeared to be a price list with mobile payment service information – the situation was thoroughly investigated but these details could not be verified definitively.

Recreation and Programming

Hickey is led by capable leadership, consisting of an experienced DJS administrator who was acting superintendent during the fourth quarter of 2023. The facility continues to maintain several meaningful programming options available to all youth and which have helped improve facility climate, likely reduced the potential for incidents arising from boredom, and afforded opportunities to cultivate positive connections and develop new skills that can assist young people upon release.

Arranged activities and special events at Hickey included a series of outside speakers talking with youth; weekly ice cream socials; a youth mentorship group (“boys-to-men”) led by male staff; staff versus youth volleyball; and baby shower events for youth with children. Additionally, youth birthdays were celebrated, and seasonal celebrations were held including a Halloween and Thanksgiving parties and Christmas holidays dinner. A breast cancer awareness walk and monthly family engagement events which all available families and youth could attend were also arranged. The two full-time recreation staff at Hickey are imaginative, seasoned professionals who ensure youth have a wide variety of structured activities to partake in during recreation time. Administrators should continue to create and offer youth a variety of outlets for positive engagement on a regular basis.

Family engagement

Increased family contact for incarcerated young people is linked with better youth outcomes both behaviorally and academically.⁷ As noted above, Hickey administrators and staff make special efforts to engage youth and their families by holding events such as “lunch with dad” and arranging for holiday family baskets.

Administrators at DJS Headquarters made the decision to take away weekly access to video calls which were facilitated by case management staff for all youth in DJS custody in November of 2023. Youth are provided with a limited number of (recorded) phone calls to immediate family members through unit phones provided and serviced by a prison

⁷ See Vera (February 2016), Identifying, Engaging, and Empowering Families, available at: <https://www.vera.org/publications/identifying-engaging-and-empowering-families-a-charge-for-juvenile-justice-agencies>

telecommunications company (Global Tel Link [GTL]). Service and connection issues with GTL phone lines are common and a major source of frustration for youth who are trying to maintain some form of contact with loved ones outside jail walls.

Youth are also allowed to purchase video calls through points earned by maintaining positive behavior through the Department's behavior management system, however many youth do not qualify for this incentive and others that do qualify forgo the increased family contact because of the large number of points the calls "cost" which precludes them from getting other incentives to maintain basic living needs such as name-brand hygiene products (which are only available through purchase via earned points).

The lack of access to virtual calls is especially problematic for youth who are detained or placed outside of their home jurisdiction as loved ones are required to travel a far distance to see their child and only for a maximum of two hours (the time allotted for visitation).

Medical Services

Nursing services at Hickey are not consistently responsive to youth needs. A youth with a gunshot wound to his head, who was suffering from persistent headaches and vision issues, asked for Tylenol for a headache. The nurse on duty advised a JJMU monitor that the youth had been provided the medication and subsequently left after finishing her shift. The monitor followed up with the nurse on the next shift who reported that the youth did not receive the requested medication per his medical notes and provided acetaminophen to the youth to help ease his pain.

Education

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was responsible for the delivery of instruction, resources and services for students in the schools within Department of Juvenile Services' (DJS) operated detention and placement facilities until June 28, 2022. Starting at the end of June 2022, an independent Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) Board focused solely on education inside DJS facilities took over responsibility for education services with implementation and resource assistance from DJS.

Special graduation events took place during the year for students at Hickey. The school at the facility - and at most DJS facility schools - suffers on-going vacancies for educators which negatively impact the provision of high-quality in-person instruction for students. During the fourth quarter of 2023, there were vacancies for a guidance counselor and for math, special education and English teachers at the school at Hickey.

Shelter Care

A small shelter care program for boys and girls was opened on Hickey grounds outside of the fenced area of the facility. The program is run by DJS administrators from

the Hickey detention center and direct-care staff from Hickey provide supervision for youth in the shelter.

Youth placed in the Hickey shelter report a lack of constructive activities to keep them engaged. Supervised off-grounds activities are prohibited and they often have no meaningful educational services during the school day. Hickey detention center (inside the security fence) typically has more arranged activities and events occurring than are available at the shelter (and youth in the detention component have access to more consistent education services).

The Department should contract with a child serving organization that has the expertise and resources to provide youth requiring temporary shelter care with high-quality support and services.

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, 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. The facility is far from most of the incarcerated girls' communities and families and many girls were concerned about maintaining family contact when housed at WMCC. In addition, the facility is under-resourced staffing-wise and there are outstanding vacancies for a recreation specialist, several full-time and on-site mental health and substance abuse clinicians, and a case manager position in addition to shortages in direct-care staffing. In an effort to make up for staffing issues, professionals and staff from other facilities have been temporarily assigned to 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 but the Department will need to prioritize treatment of the girls and work harder to secure resources for girls if this opportunity is to be fully realized.

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 held in the single 12-cell unit at Cheltenham Youth Detention Center.

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. The facility is far from most of the incarcerated girls' communities and families and many girls were concerned about maintaining family contact when housed at WMCC. In addition, the facility is under-resourced staffing-wise and there are outstanding vacancies for a recreation specialist, several full-time and on-site mental health and substance abuse clinicians, and a case manager position in addition to shortages in direct-care staffing. In an effort to make up for staffing issues, professionals and staff from other facilities have been temporarily assigned to 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, but the Department will need to prioritize treatment of girls and work harder to secure resources for girls under their care if this opportunity is to be fully realized.

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. Black youth represented 77% of entries during calendar year 2023 versus 80% in calendar year 2022.

LESCC – Selected Incident Categories	2021	2022	2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	13	18	19
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	30	49	82
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	5	11	14
3. Physical Restraint	69	170	143
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	1	2	5
5. Seclusion	1	18	10
6. Contraband	7	8	7
7. Suicide Ideation	13	25	6
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	3	3	2

The average daily population at LESCC increased by 1 (from 18 to 19) in calendar year 2023 when compared to 2022. Continuing the comparison between the same two time periods, youth fights and assaults increased by 67%. However, physical restraints of youth by staff decreased by 16% and the use of seclusion and instances of suicide ideation also decreased substantially. Usage of mechanical restraints rose slightly, however, mechanical restraint usage on children is used sparingly inside LESCC and remains low when compared to other DJS detention centers.

Students at LESCC work toward a high school diploma or prepare to take the GED. Online community college courses and certification in robotics and in construction site

flagger are available to the young people at LESCC the DJS' Juvenile Services' Education Program (JSEP). JSEP also organizes clubs including a book club, a math club, a spoken word club, and a Think Like a Millionaire Club. The vacancy for a science teacher at LESCC should be filled as soon as possible.

The behavioral health therapist facilitates preparatory treatment hours using dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT) for youth who are in pending placement status (awaiting entrance to a DJS committed program). Drug, alcohol, and psycho-educational groups are also offered. A social worker/drug counselor vacancy at LESCC should be filled as soon as possible.

There is a need for more classroom space at the facility. There is also a yet-to-be-met need for a full-time recreation specialist at LESCC.

Youth at LESCC can earn special meals and compete for "unit of the week".

Western Maryland Children’s Center

Western Maryland Children’s Center (WMCC), located in Washington County, is a 24-bed maximum security detention center for boys owned and operated by the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS/the Department). Black youth represented 74% of total youth entries in 2023 compared to 73% of total entries in 2022. Hispanic/Latino youth accounted for 7% of total entries during calendar years 2022 and 2023.

WMCC – Selected Incident Categories	2021	2022	2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	11	15	16
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	25	41	57
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	3	13	8
3. Physical Restraint	76	149	140
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	14	35	38
5. Seclusion	5	26	17
6. Contraband	1	3	3
7. Suicide Ideation	0	10	9
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	0	1	5

The average daily population at WMCC increased by 1 (from 15 to 16) in calendar year 2023 when compared to 2022. During the same time period, youth fights and assaults increased by 39% and use of mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) increased slightly (from 35 instances in 2022 to 38 instances in 2023). However, physical restraints of youth by staff and use of seclusion declined (by 6% and 35% respectively).

WMCC and the History of Detained Girls in Maryland

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 a unit at 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. The majority of detained girls remained at Cheltenham until October of 2023.

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. The facility is far from most of the incarcerated girls' communities and families and many girls were concerned about maintaining family contact when housed at WMCC. In addition, the facility is under-resourced staffing-wise and there are outstanding vacancies for a recreation specialist, several full-time and on-site mental health and substance abuse clinicians, and a case manager position in addition to shortages in direct-care staffing. In an effort to make up for staffing issues, direct care staff and other professionals from other facilities have been temporarily assigned to WMCC.

Outdoor and classroom space is limited at WMCC. The Department should move forward with plans to expand classroom space at the facility.

Despite these issues, having a detention facility dedicated to girls provides a greater opportunity to address the unique medical, reproductive health, mental health, and trauma-related needs of girls in the juvenile justice system. However, the Department will need to work harder to secure resources for girls if this opportunity is to be fully realized.

WMCC and Treatment Needs for Committed Girls

Girls represent a small number of committed youth in the deep (carceral) end of Maryland's juvenile justice system, yet committed girls often have highly complex mental health, substance abuse, family and trauma-related issues that require specialized treatment. Justice-involved girls deserve to have access to trauma- and gender-responsive programming to help them heal, grow, and thrive, yet their low numbers in comparison to that of justice-involved boys mean that the needs of girls have been neglected. Unlike for boys, DJS lacks a committed placement facility solely devoted to girls' needs. Girls committed to the Department are currently being housed in detention at WMCC and a treatment program within the detention center was not developed for them until late February 2024, even though WMCC began housing committed girls in October of 2023. One girl who had been committed for over two months at WMCC reported that she is just "doing dead time" while in detention and requested to go somewhere else so she could be in a treatment environment and begin to receive services.

Past iterations of the Department's attempts to run committed programs for girls have not been successful as these facilities were far from youth homes and communities and were grounded in a correctional approach to treatment and services which afforded little opportunity for individualized attention, learning, exploration, growth, and empowerment. Indeed, girls often deteriorated mentally while incarcerated in Department-operated placement sites.

The care of justice-involved girls committed to receive services through the Department should be prioritized and the current model of warehousing youth in need of services inside corrections-oriented institutions far from youth families should be replaced. The Department should facilitate a community-based continuum of care (both residential and non-residential) which is run by professionals with experience in treating the mental health, substance abuse, and trauma related needs of girls and which offers specialized services tailored to individual girls' strengths, interests, and opportunities for growth.

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 48 boys. Black youth represented 83% of total entries in both 2022 and 2023.

Victor Cullen – Selected Incident Categories	2021	2022	2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	12	16	23
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	15	28	47
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	5	4	16
3. Physical Restraint	47	38	89
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	30	9	27
5. Seclusion	7	1	13
6. Contraband	1	7	19
7. Suicide Ideation	3	1	9
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	0
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	4	1	5

The average daily population at Cullen increased by 44% in calendar year 2023 when compared to 2022.

Continuing to compare the same time periods:

- Youth fights and assaults increased by 68%.
- Alleged youth on staff assaults increased fourfold.
- Physical restraints of youth more than doubled.

- Incidents involving contraband also more than doubled.
- Use of seclusion increased substantially (from 1 instance in 2022 to 13 instances in 2023).
- Usage of mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) inside the facility tripled.

There were severe shortages of case management staff at Cullen during the fourth quarter of 2023 that are ongoing through time of writing (February of 2024) and which has resulted in delays in getting discharge summaries completed for youth, disruptions in youth access to phone calls to attorneys and family members, lack of follow-up and communication with youth over treatment hours earned and necessary requirements to complete the program, and a missed virtual court date (because no one was available to log the youth in for court) for one youth at Cullen. The Department should arrange for more case management staff at Cullen to address these gaps in services and to substantially bolster family engagement efforts.

Basic Needs

Cullen struggles with providing youth basic needs for daily living. During the fourth quarter of 2023, youth reported the following:

- Shoes and socks are not replaced when worn out, leading to foot odors;
- Outdoor gear was not provided to a youth in the work program, resulting in the youth having to work outdoors in cold temperatures without adequate protective gear such as work gloves;
- One youth did not have a coat in his size because of his large stature;
- One youth reported not receiving thermal underwear to wear during cold months despite repeated requests for the items; and
- Youth report not being provided with sufficient soap to properly bathe during showers.

Activities and Programming

There are some activities available for young people at Cullen including biweekly visits with animals organized through a local vet. The school component (JSEP) at the facility arranges for youth to take driver learner permit and safe food handler certification classes and organizes GED preparation and testing. However, youth say they need many more engaging activities and much more constructive programming at the facility to keep occupied. Recreation staff are not consistently invested in creating a variety of engaging structured activities for the youth to participate in and often rely on direct-care staff to devise and conduct recreation activities with the youth. An on-site therapy dog is rarely seen on the living units and youth have limited interactions and time with him. Incarcerated youth at Cullen have also asked for items such as mini-DVD players to keep

them occupied and help them cope with boredom but requests are not consistently accommodated.

Cullen can improve facility climate, potentially reduce incidents arising from boredom, and help youth normalization by increasing programming options both on- and off-site which would also afford youth opportunities to cultivate positive connections and develop new skills that can assist them upon release. Young people should have an integral voice in developing programming at the facility and the Department should provide Cullen with resources (including staffing resources) to help implement quality programming for the kids incarcerated there.

Education

The Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) is responsible for education services in DJS facilities, including Victor Cullen.

Cullen has a shortage of education-related personnel. During the fourth quarter of 2023, there were vacancies for a guidance counselor, CTE teacher, math teacher, resource teacher, and special education teacher.

Some high school graduates are eligible to attend a DJS-led off-grounds work initiative in partnership with state agencies for three days each week. While this is a laudable initiative, youth in the work program report regularly missing days of work due to a lack of direct-care staff available to escort them to, and supervise them at, the work site.

Victor Cullen Center Program for Girls and Young Women

There were three girls placed at Cullen in the fourth quarter of 2023. Two girls were discharged in November after completing program requirements. One girl was ejected from Cullen because the program could not meet her needs. She was sent to Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC), a DJS-operated facility in Hagerstown, Maryland, which was converted from an all-boys to an all-girls detention center in October of 2023. She successfully completed her treatment program requirements while at WMCC and was discharged home. The Department has closed the girls program at Cullen, and girls committed to a hardware secure level of security receive services through DJS at Western Maryland Children's Center.

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

The Garrett Children's Center (GCC), 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.

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 (renamed the Garrett Children's Center and pictured below).

Garrett Children's Center was operational for approximately 2 years (from December of 2018 to December of 2020) before it closed to youth in 2021 following a COVID-19 outbreak at the facility. However, the facility still retains staff that report on-site, including teachers who provide online courses for those DJS schools that lack certified teachers in core content areas.

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 beds) and Backbone Mountain (28 beds). Black youth represented 81% of total youth entries in 2023 compared to 86% of total youth entries in 2022. Hispanic/Latino youth represented 7% of total youth entries in 2023 compared to 10% of total youth entries in 2022.

Youth Centers X2-Select Incident Categories	2021	2022	2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	27	43	53
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	26	57	116
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	14	23	37
3. Physical Restraint	174	196	504
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	40	34	73
5. Seclusion	0	1	0
6. Contraband	11	14	42
7. Suicide Ideation	4	21	24
8. Suicide Attempt	0	0	1
9. Self-Injurious Behavior	1	1	1

The average daily population at the youth centers increased by 23% in calendar year 2023 when compared to 2022.

Continuing the comparison of the same time periods:

- Youth fights and assaults increased by 103%.
- Physical restraints of youth by staff increased by 157%.
- Incidents of contraband increased substantially (from 14 incidents in 2022 to 42 incidents during 2023).
- Use of mechanical restraints (handcuffs and/or leg irons) inside the facilities increased by 115%.

The majority of incidents at the youth centers occurred at Green Ridge Youth Center during the 2023 calendar year.

Incident Category	Backbone 2023	Green Ridge 2023
Average Daily Population (ADP)	24	26
1. Youth on Youth Assault/Fight	45	71
2. Alleged Youth on Staff Assault	14	23
3. Physical Restraint	156	348
4. Use of Handcuffs and/or Shackles	23	50
7. Suicide Ideation	2	22

Successful employee retention is a severe challenge at the youth centers. Green Ridge lacks sufficient numbers of experienced supervisory and direct-care staff and there is also a shortage of mental health clinicians at the facility. While there are certain staffers youth feel supported by, youth frequently report antagonistic youth/staff interactions and relationships and power struggles between youth and staff at Green Ridge. Incidents of concern included a situation in September at Green Ridge where a youth managed to get hold of and ingest something through a vape pen and suffered a bad reaction that lasted for hours – the incident was thoroughly investigated but the origin of the vape pen and the substance could not be definitively proven (Incidents 23-175846 and 175841). Less toxic and more constructive and positive relationships in general between staff and youth at Green Ridge are necessary prerequisites for the facility to become a more functional and potentially therapeutically oriented placement.

Staff at both Green Ridge and Backbone need ongoing training and opportunities to develop relational skills in working with children and young people. Vacancies for mental health clinicians at both facilities should be filled with culturally competent and experienced professionals with expertise in working with justice-involved young people.

Programming at the youth centers includes individual, group and family therapeutic sessions utilizing elements of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). Seven Challenges, a treatment model designed to help young people with substance abuse issues, is also used.

The school day at DJS operated facilities (both in placement and detention centers) consists of six hours of classes in core subjects and behavioral health staff have frequently commented that there is not enough time left over each day to provide effective in-depth treatment for the young people in the Department's custody.

Activities include intramural sports tournaments and a "Reflections" program which incorporates climbing activities and rope elements. There are "group of the week" and "group of the month" initiatives with food from outside the facility, time playing games or watching movies as rewards.

Youth at both youth centers consistently ask for more and better quality food.

Family Engagement

The youth centers are located far from most youth families and communities (as much as a two-and-a-half to four-hour drive each way) and it is therefore very challenging for youth to maintain ties with loved ones during their incarceration because of the difficulties involved for families who want to visit in-person. In addition, the Department does not sufficiently prioritize or devote resources to helping families stay involved throughout their child's incarceration. For example, until recently, many families relied on virtual visits to stay in visual contact with their children. These weekly virtual calls, which were provided by case management staff and were instituted as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, were taken away by DJS in mid-November of 2023 – just prior to the 2023 holiday season and even though COVID-19 is still a presence inside DJS facilities as outbreaks continue to cause disruptions and periodic stringent quarantine requirements for incarcerated youth continue to occur. Lack of a sufficient level of contact with family members increases the psychological toll that carceral environments have on youth well-being, and several young people reported feeling upset and sad about the virtual calls being taken away from them.

Education

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was responsible for the delivery of instruction, resources and services for students in the schools within Department of Juvenile Services' (DJS) operated detention and placement facilities until June 28, 2022. Starting at the end of June of 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 DJS.

Salaries for JSEP teachers and educational personnel are higher at the youth centers than in the local school districts in which the centers are located. While there are widespread and ongoing school staffing issues at other JSEP facilities (where teacher salaries are less than surrounding community schools), vacancies at the youth centers for education staff occur infrequently.

The schools component of the youth centers offers opportunities to attain academic credits and GED preparation and testing to qualifying candidates. Post-secondary options for youth are gradually expanding for youth at the youth centers. Some eligible high school graduates at Backbone Mountain are able to take in-person classes at a local community college and there are some virtual community college courses available to youth (during college semesters) at both youth centers. Graduates at both Backbone and Green Ridge are able to participate in an off grounds work program with the Department of Natural Resources (Backbone) or the Department of the Environment (Green Ridge) for three days a week. Clubs – including for chess and robotics) arranged by JSEP are available at Backbone and are scheduled to begin at Green Ridge over the coming months.

In addition to the courses and experiences available as described above, youth in placement should also have opportunities to volunteer, work, intern and recreate in nearby communities so as to help them normalize and gain valuable skills that will help them upon release. While the written portion of the driver's permit test and a few short certification courses are available for completion virtually at the youth centers (including OSHA 10 and 30 and ServSafe modules), the young people incarcerated there need more and more substantial opportunities for career and technical education. Extensive and varied job and skills training both on- and off-site should be arranged and made widely available.

While off-grounds outings have restarted following the reduction in the occurrence and severity of Covid-19 cases, youth need much greater access to off grounds recreational and community volunteering opportunities.

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 ongoing 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 there have been no new admissions to the program through DJS since that time. While there were no youth placed at Silver Oak by DJS during in 2023, the facility served a small number of day students from surrounding communities during 2023.

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 Vision Quest, Inc., and is licensed by DJS to house up to 24 youth.

Morning Star utilizes the trauma-informed Sanctuary model. Therapeutic services are provided onsite and treatment services are supplemented by clinicians from community mental health organizations and include individual and family counseling. Some youth at Morningstar participate in work, volunteer, recreational and educational activities in nearby communities. On grounds recreational activities include volleyball, basketball, and the use of a weight room, Foosball (table soccer) and a jumbo Connect 4 game set with chess game option included. Play Station is available on living units and in the dining hall. Youth can also partake in driver permit training.

There are regular family visit times and holiday celebrations are arranged, however, the young people at Morning Star requested more frequent opportunities for contact with loved ones. The facility should increase the number of allotted phone and video calls.

School at Morning Star includes GED preparation and high school credit. However, youth report an excess of downtime during after-school hours and on weekends and requested more structured activities during these periods. An equine riding program - which was a highlight of the therapeutic program at Morning Star - has not been functional for months and could help fill some of the gaps in programming if it again becomes available. The onsite gym needs to be renovated and shortcomings in the basketball area need to be permanently addressed.

Youth have expressed concerns about food quality and a lack of variety in meals and would like opportunities to choose their meals, at least periodically. Administration at the facility should re-instate a youth advisory board to get suggestions from young people concerning food choices and about expanding the variety and type of activities that are available at Morning Star.

Staff recruitment and retention is a challenge at Morning Star and instances of lapses in appropriate supervision remain an issue. In Incident 176568, youth were not being directly supervised and began fighting in a bedroom (where there are no security cameras). A youth turned up the volume of a television in an adjacent TV room so that staff could not hear what was happening in the bedroom. One of the youth who was involved in the fight had to be taken off-grounds for medical attention due to injuries sustained during the incident.

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 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 therapeutic, education, employment and enrichment opportunities for youth while they reside in a home-like environment. Students are enrolled in local schools and work toward attaining a high school diploma.

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF
JUVENILE SERVICES - RESPONSE**



**DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES
RESPONSE TO JJMU 2023 FOURTH QUARTER AND ANNUAL REPORT**

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

The Department of Juvenile Services (“DJS” or “the Department”) agrees with much of the substance of the Report and is working to address issues raised by the JJMU.

Due to the substantial agreement with the findings, 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:

As indicated in its previous response, DJS’ facility reform strategy is to implement innovation teams focused on transforming programming and conditions in its residential programs. DJS launched its facility innovation teams this Quarter. This strategy is based on two key principles:

- Staff and youth are deserving of working and living in an environment that acknowledges and recognizes their full humanity; and
- As the agency works to shift capacity and resources from expensive and often ineffective residential services to community-based services, supports and opportunities, the effort requires a both/and approach, where resources are deployed to develop a robust residential strategy that works to stop the revolving door to entry, reimagines the work of residential staff, and innovates vibrant and strong community ties.

DJS' approach centers the experiences, perspectives and wisdom of the people most impacted by the change - the young people and DJS staff. As Governor Wes Moore has stated "we believe that the people closest to the problems are closest to the solutions."

The strategy will unfold as the Department's innovation teams execute a co-design framework. The effort will involve operationalizing several of our core values/anchors: social, political, and historical education; cultural healing; restorative justice; and racial justice and equity.

The Innovation Team effort will facilitate transformation, to start, in three facilities: the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center (BCJJC), the Western Maryland Children's Center (WMCC), and Victor Cullen. To manage this endeavor DJS is proceeding with a multilayered organizational structure to help achieve both inclusion and accountability. The Lead Innovation Team will function as an Advisory Board, helping to inform, influence, and champion creativity throughout the change process; while the three facility-based Innovation Teams will be working to develop and implement strategies at the facility level.

The Lead team kicked off on March 7, 2024 (see below for a list of participants). The meeting was held in the BCJJC gymnasium so that young people currently detained at BCJJC could join the team. The meeting was intentionally designed to call participant's humanity into the space, rather than roles, titles, and years of experience. For example, introductions and check-ins included simply: "What's your name and in two sentences describe who you are without talking about what you do."

The team is working on developing community agreements (e.g. in this space, we don't use roles and titles and we call everyone by their first name); a set of core values anchoring the work; and a shared understanding of key language and concepts. During the meeting participants also spent time in small group discussions brainstorming and determining the data indicators that help measure climate and culture.

DJS Innovation Team staff are now in the process of organizing and forming the facility-based Innovation Teams (BCJJC will launch first, WMCC second, and Victor Cullen third), and the first key activity and deliverable will be for the research and evaluation team to conduct an analysis specific to each facility. Focus groups will then be conducted with young people and staff (separately) to react, reflect, and provide input around the climate/culture data analysis.

These focus groups will aim to: better understand the practices behind the data; begin documenting ideas and solutions; and continue to identify leaders and champions (change agents) among young people and staff.

Lead (Advisory) Innovation Team

- *Deputy Secretary Residential Services*
- *Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary*
- *Innovation Team Project Manager*
- *Innovation Team Advisor*
- *Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff*
- *Positive Youth Development Special Advisor*
- *Executive Director Office of Equity & Inclusion*
- *Executive Director Commitment*
- *Executive Director Detention*
- *Program Services Coordinator*
- *Executive Director Intake & Pre-Adjudication*
- *Family & Youth Coordinator*
- *Impacted Young Person (detained at BCJJC)*
- *Impacted Young Person (detained at BCJJC)*
- *Impacted Young Person (pending placement at BCJJC)*
- *Impacted Young Person (pending placement at BCJJC)*
- *Impacted Young Person*
- *Impacted Young Person*
- *Director of General Services*
- *Impacted Parent/Guardian*
- *Impacted Parent/Guardian*
- *Impacted Parent/Guardian*
- *JSEP Representatives*
- *Resident Advisor Supervisor*
- *Resident Advisor Supervisor*
- *Residential Case Manager*
- *Community Case Manager*
- *Research & Eval Rep*
- *Grassroot Community Leader*

Specific responses to a number of concerns raised by JJMU:

The Department will further review JJMU's 4th Quarter report and key recommendations to integrate into DJS' work plans. To start, DJS is beginning work to implement the following non-exhaustive list of recommendations:

- In order to ensure adequate toiletry supplies in DJS' residential facilities, moving forward each facility will have a specific buyer from DJS' procurement unit assigned to purchase supplies for the facility.
- To better address girls' and boys' interest in more options for hair styling and hair care options, DJS is exploring expanding the options to better meet our young people's needs, including consideration of issuing an RFP for vendors to provide these services.
- Youth on adult hold status have been authorized to participate in CHAMPS activities since July 2023. DJS will follow-up to ensure participation is occurring consistently.
- DJS is examining staffing at the Cheltenham Youth Detention Center to assess appropriate staffing levels. In addition, since the Noyes facility will not be reopening in the foreseeable future, staff previously assigned to Noyes are now fully assigned to Cheltenham and an additional recreation specialist will be assigned to Cheltenham effective 4/17/24.
- To better meet the needs of girls in DJS residential care, in addition to focused attention through WMCC being an Innovation Team facility, the facility recently launched the "Peace Center" program for committed girls. The Department is also planning to issue an RFP for staff secure housing for girls.

Please accept this as the Department's response to your Fourth 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's Response to the Fourth Quarter Report and 2023 Annual Review

The Juvenile Services Education Program (JSEP) values the observations, insights, and suggestions provided by JJMU. We appreciate the chance to respond and maintain an ongoing dialogue aimed at enhancing education programs across the JSEP school system. JSEP agrees with the statement by JJMU that “youth are entitled to receive the same level of educational services while incarcerated that they receive in community schools” (pg. 7). Senate Bill 497 also requires that the education a juvenile receives while in the custody of DJS, uses a curriculum that matches, in quality, that which the student would receive in their public school. (SB 497, 9-607). To that end, JSEP has developed and is currently implementing a curriculum which meets all Maryland standards and will allow a student to re-enter their public school having engaged in an educational program on par with the program in their home school.

Mental Health

JSEP recently converted two positions to school social worker positions in order to help mitigate the mental health concerns during the school day. Offers have been made to two candidates, one for the west and one for the east, and their start dates are pending the completion of the necessary HR processes. JSEP is also looking forward to the start of one of the two vacant school psychologist positions. JSEP has a solicitation on eMMA that will enable us to contract for psychological services when needed, but that has not been completed at this time.

These positions will allow JSEP to improve the mental health and educational services to our students in several ways. These new mental health professionals, along with school counselors, will be in the school buildings. Timely interventions are important in addressing issues, especially in the school setting. When problems are identified early and addressed promptly, it not only prevents them from escalating but also allows students to remain engaged in their learning. Returning students to school instead of sending them to units can maintain their academic progress and keep them connected with their peers and teachers. This proactive approach prioritizes support of the student, benefiting both the students and the educational setting. The school psychologist and social workers will also help to provide related services to our students with IEPs and 504s when they are in their plans.

There is at least one school counselor position allocated in every JSEP school and while the school social workers and school psychologist are all itinerant, they will be strategically housed to offer support to students across all schools. A school psychologist will be housed at Cheltenham with another at BCJJC and a school social worker at Hickey. These professionals will serve the eastern part of the State. There will also be a school psychologist housed at Backbone and a school social worker at Cullen to serve the western part of the State. Once JSEP is able to contract for additional psychological services, any voids in daily service should be met which will serve to enhance the mental health services already provided to the students from DJS during the school day. JSEP has a modified school schedule with a long break in the middle of the day to allow students to have the necessary time to meet with DJS mental health staff. School schedules and school calendars are revised every year to best meet the needs of

our students. JSEP continues to be open to revisiting this issue. COMAR regulations require students to be in school six hours per day.

Education Concerns

Vacancies, especially teacher vacancies, also continue to be a concern for JSEP. The JSEP Board is working with DJS to determine what modifications to scheduling and compensation would provide for greater teacher retention and hiring. As a state agency, with all teachers being state employees, adjustments to schedules and compensation must go through the state legislature. DJS is exploring potential legislative strategies for the next legislative session.

In the meantime, JSEP and DJS HR are actively seeking innovative methods to recruit new teachers. JSEP has MOUs with UMES and Bowie State, both HBCUs with excellent education programs. They have included JSEP in their hiring events as well as inviting us into their classrooms to speak with their education candidates. JSEP continues to seek productive advertising streams, attend hiring events throughout the state and reach out to colleges and universities with whom JSEP staff members have relationships, either academic or professional.

The school at the Charles H. Hickey School is a good example of the gains that can be made when schools become more fully staffed. At the beginning of this academic year Hickey was experiencing a 36% vacancy rate. That rate is now down to 17%. While still significant, what Hickey has been able to accomplish with the influx of teachers is impressive. They have fully implemented a co-teaching, small group model which is vital to effective teaching in the mixed class model (teaching multiple subjects simultaneously in a single classroom) which is the reality in the large DJS facilities. This has had a positive effect on both instruction and student engagement.

JSEP is excited to be able to offer both Health and PE as original credit classes this summer. Adding additional classes during the school year, including PE and art, is difficult because of several factors. The decision to teach five 70-minute class periods allows our students, who frequently come to us over-aged and under-credited, to earn credits in the classes they need for their high school graduation twice as quickly as they would in the home LEA. This is hugely motivating for students and has even been known to convince students to drop back into schools they had dropped out of before their detainment. Earning a high school diploma has been documented to have a substantial impact on students' future earning power and to lessen the likelihood of recidivism. Earning credits at an accelerated pace while in a JSEP school is a true advantage for our students.

Additionally, they are earning those credits in a small class environment with mandatory attendance requirements. Those two factors combine to foster success in those accelerated courses. If JSEP were to shorten the class periods to allow for more elective courses, it would necessitate abandoning our accelerated model as there would not be enough time in class to meet the standards necessary to earn a credit in a semester.

JSEP has well-documented problems with vacancies. Adding additional courses would require adding additional teachers who are highly qualified in the areas they would be teaching. This would compound the seemingly insurmountable problem with teacher vacancies.

JSEP recognizes the value of courses such as PE and art, along with other activities that broaden students' experiences and spark fresh interests. To that end, JSEP has planned and implemented after school and weekend clubs in all schools. This allows students new experiences while keeping in place school offerings which allow for a shorter graduation timeline. JSEP is also able to take advantage of the skills and talents of current employees, by having them facilitate clubs in areas where they have expertise but not hold a certification. These clubs are popular with students, and we are improving on the implementation with each new set of clubs.

JSEP is keenly aware of the benefits of career and technical education for many of the students in our schools. The JSEP CTE coordinator has been working on solutions that will meet the needs of our students in their current situations. The purchase of Transfr virtual reality headsets for each facility is in the procurement process. These purchases were made possible through federal money acquired through the Perkins Grant and the N&D grant. These headsets allow for the exploration, training, and certifications in 400 different industries. They will be used as part of the CTE curriculum as well as with our post-secondary students. Additionally, this week, MSDE has released the long-awaited list of approved industry certifications. These certifications align with industry standards and were approved as certifications that would assist students in securing meaningful jobs leading to productive careers. The CTE coordinator is reviewing that list to see which are relevant to high school students and how JSEP can access those certifications for our students.

Parent Engagement

JSEP is committed to increasing the frequency and quality of our parent engagement program. JSEP has included significant funding for in-person parent engagement activities in both our FY 23 and FY 24 N & D grants. These funds are shared between all schools and provide enjoyable and informative parent engagement events. The JSEP superintendent has asked that all instances of a parent not being able to attend a family engagement event due to transportation be referred to her so she can remedy that situation. JSEP believes it is paramount for families to be involved with their child's education both in terms of student achievement and student mental health.

So in addition to increasing meaningful in-person family engagements, JSEP is committed to making families as much a part of their child's educational journey as they would be in their home LEA. JSEP is finalizing its Student/Parent handbook which will be sent home to every family with a welcome letter and contact information for the school, as well as a FERPA letter, a home language survey, and information on how to access our school information system, PowerSchool. Parents will have real time access to their student's grades and will be able to see their assignments.

The superintendent is also in discussions to procure an app that our parents will be able to access in which JSEP will be able to keep them informed about all that is going on in schools, including progress and report cards being mailed, parent engagement activities, school notices,

club activities, and other updates. JSEP will also be able to push out things such as exemplary student work and examples of student creations.

Post-secondary

JSEP continues to work to improve programming for post-secondary students across the system. We are excited about a program we will be able to offer this summer to all our post-secondary students through Allegheny Community College. Post-secondary students from across the state will be able to participate in a cohort-style program designed for them that not only prepares them for careers but also prepares the students to take and pass their Accuplacer assessment. This will enable students who wish to pursue credit bearing academic classes to do so. This is an opportunity unique to JSEP students.

BCJJC

BCJJC has added several more clubs in addition to the ones mentioned in the report including a vision board club, the Gentleman of BCJJC club, and the very popular GED club on weekends. The GED club is so well attended that they have had to bring in volunteers to assist the two people running the club. These clubs, along JSEP's increased emphasis on GED skills in our curriculum, has led to a large increase in the number of GEDs earned at BCJJC and across the state. This is particularly impressive given that BCJJC is a detention center which tends to have a shorter length of stay than the treatment centers. Since the closing of Noyes, the bulk of the GEDs in the state have come from the placements. In FY23, students from BCJJC earned a total of 3 GEDs. As of March 15, 2024, BCJJC students have earned 7 GEDs toward their FY24 total with a pass rate of 87.5%.

JSEP looks forward to the availability of a dedicated library space in the new part of the school building. A library system has been purchased as well as a collection of books for all the schools including BCJJC. Additional books, both physical and e-books are in the procurement process. JSEP is also procuring tablets which students will be able to take to the unit that are compatible with our e-book collection. This will allow for an even greater amount of leisure reading.

CYDC

JSEP continues to work with DJS operations, with weekly meetings, to eliminate the school attendance issues. JSEP believes the addition of a school psychologist housed at Cheltenham will help to resolve issues between students during school more quickly. Timely mediation will eliminate the need to move entire units out of school and lead to minimal loss of educational time for students involved in incidents or having mental health crises.

CHHS

The vacancies mentioned in the JJMU report still exist except for the position of an English teacher which has been filled. Hickey was also able to fill the school secretary, one special education, and a librarian positions. Hickey's success in implementing the co-teaching, small groups model of instruction was documented earlier in this report.

LESCC

Space for education does remain an issue at LESCC. JSEP is working with Operations to find a dedicated space where the school counselor can meet privately with students and deliver related services to students who require them in their IEP or 504 plans, as well as a space for the GED administrator to administer GED tests.

VCC

Human Resources has extended offers to a resource teacher and school counselor to start at Cullen once their contracts in their LEAs expire this summer.

JSEP is committed to working with the Cullen superintendent and his team to come up with a viable schedule for after school clubs which also meets the needs for other requirements the students have.

The VR headsets from Vehicles for Change are up running and the students were able to demonstrate their use to the Lieutenant Governor and then teach her how to use them.

Youth Centers

Green Ridge is still waiting for the garage doors for their workshop. As soon as those are available, JSEP will be able to offer carpentry as an option to those students. Allegany Community College, our newest community college partner, is committed to offering options for both our post-secondary and secondary students. Once we finalize the cohort program for the summer post-secondary program, we will begin to work on a dual enrollment course for our high school students.

The students at Green Ridge and Backbone will benefit from the new industry certifications which were released by MSDE this week. These should give students certifications that will help them get certified in areas which will lead to promising careers. In addition to the Garrett Community College courses and the online course, the CTE teacher at Backbone is teaching the cabling certification. This is a valuable certification that can lead to lucrative jobs in many industries.