



*"I applaud the people at DYRS and the agency's partners whose hard work, dedication, and collaborative spirit improves the quality of life for youth, communities, and our city as a whole."*

- Mayor Vincent C. Gray

## Who We Serve



DYRS works with young people in the District who have gotten into trouble with the law. We are responsible for the custody, supervision and care of young people charged with an offense and either:

- Detained in a DYRS facility while awaiting court involvement, or
- Committed to DYRS by a DC Family Court judge after court involvement

Youth can be committed to the juvenile system if they are 18 or younger; once they are committed, they may remain in our care until the age of 21. To help young people get on the right track, our agency provides comprehensive support services to committed youth, both within the community and in our secure facilities.

## Our Impact

DYRS staff are committed to promoting public safety through the effective rehabilitation of the youth in our care. We are preparing the District's court-involved youth to succeed, and more than ever before, DYRS youth are working, earning high school diplomas, going to college, and engaging in positive activities in their home neighborhoods. At the same time, re-arrest and re-conviction rates for DYRS youth are logging consistent year to year reductions.



## The DYRS Approach

We believe that the best, most effective way to rehabilitate youth is to minimize lock-up and to maximize community-based services and placements. Our belief is consistent with the latest research, which shows that the best way to enhance long-term public safety is to keep court-involved youth close to home and provide them with the tools they need to successfully transition into adulthood and away from re-offending.

We hold youth accountable and work with them to become productive adults. We want what every caregiver wants for their children: a good education, vocational training that leads to a job, a sense of belonging to their community, and for the young people to believe in themselves and their abilities.



Art by Youth: D.M. age 19

## Our Strategic Goals

- **Youth Prepared to Succeed**  
Helping court-involved youth develop the skills and relationships they need to succeed is DYRS' most important long-term public safety strategy. We do this by focusing on six major developmental needs of youth: work, education, health, relationships, community, and creativity.
- **Safe Communities and Safe Facilities**  
We prioritize improving the long-term safety of neighborhoods across the District and ensuring that youth are living in a safe environment, properly supervised, and receiving the support they need to thrive. Knowing that our youth and staff feel safe in our facilities is a companion goal.
- **Efficient and Effective Management**  
Managing agency resources smartly and focusing on results drive our ability to rehabilitate youth and preserve public safety gains.



## DC YouthLink: Serving Youth in The Community

We have a legal mandate to place youth in the least restrictive, most home-like environment we can, consistent with public safety. Clearly, there are times when young people need to be in secure detention, and we use this option when other interventions just won't work. Where appropriate, we place youth in the community with support and supervision.

To strengthen our delivery of community-based support services, we launched DC YouthLink in 2009. Through DC YouthLink, we are partnering with the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust and the non-profit community to develop a coalition of community-based service providers with experience in supporting court-involved youth. We are developing local resources that can keep our youth from re-offending and stop others from entering the juvenile justice system in the first place.

### What DC YouthLink does?

- Connects DYRS youth who are in the community to services and resources to help them succeed.
- Protects public safety by engaging court-involved youth in structured activities.
- Invests in and builds upon the strengths of community-based organizations to serve youth near their homes.

In DC YouthLink's first four years, over 1,000 court-involved youth have received community-based services ranging from mentoring to tutoring to substance abuse interventions to help them succeed. Some of our service providers are Sasha Bruce Youthworks for family counseling, CareerPath DC for work readiness and NOMIS for health and fitness.

Eighteen-year-old S.C. tells us in his own words how his DC YouthLink mentor changed his life.

*"...I really didn't have any male figure growing up, just me and my mom. I had to learn from the streets. But everything changed when my mentor showed me the correct direction to be the smarter, stronger and successful man that I am today."*



## DYRS: Past and Present

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services Establishment Act of 2004 launched DYRS as the cabinet-level agency for the District's juvenile justice system. Before this, juvenile detention and placements were overseen by the Youth Services Administration (YSA), a division of the DC Department of Human Services.

The impetus behind DYRS was the Blue Ribbon Commission on Youth Safety and Juvenile Justice Reform, which outlined new juvenile justice goals for the District: reducing an overreliance on secure detention and placement; developing a continuum of community-based services and placement alternatives; and emphasizing youth rehabilitation.

This led the District to close its former Oak Hill Youth Detention Center and open the New Beginnings Youth Development Center in 2009, a 60-bed treatment facility for committed males. New Beginnings provides youth with 24-hour supervision and a six-step treatment program. DC YouthLink and the principles of positive youth development round out the District's other major juvenile justice reforms.



## DYRS is a National Model for Positive Youth Justice

DYRS is seen as a model by juvenile justice experts nationwide for effectively rehabilitating youth. Our DC YouthLink initiative won recognition from the National Criminal Justice Association as an Outstanding Criminal Justice Program in 2013 along with four other awardees.



## How You Can Help

We are proud of our progress, and we also recognize that there is more work to be done. You can help by being a role model to young people. You can have an impact far larger than you imagine by offering to have a young person shadow you at work, encouraging their creativity, taking an interest in what they are doing, and recognizing their strengths. We need your eyes and ears to help keep youth on the right path.