

# DYRS • 2011 Annual Performance Report



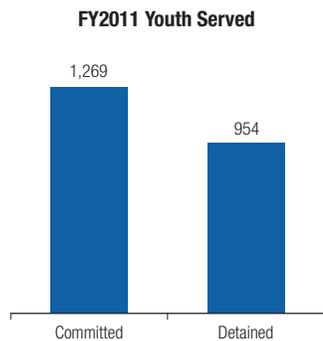
# Executive Summary

DYRS strives to implement innovative policies, practices, and reforms that improve not only the lives of the youth under its care, but also the safety and well-being of the greater community. This report provides an overview of DYRS and outlines the key FY2011 initiatives and outcomes with respect to positive youth justice, public safety, and effective agency management.

## About DYRS

DYRS is responsible for the supervision, custody, and care of young people charged with a delinquent act in the District who are detained while awaiting adjudication or committed to DYRS following adjudication. The agency provides comprehensive support services to youth placed in its care, both in DYRS facilities and within the community. DYRS actively partners with other District agencies and the community, as well as with locally and nationally recognized juvenile justice organizations, to implement innovative, evidence-based programming models that are in line with industry best practices.

DYRS is assigned to the District government's Health and Human Services cluster, reporting to the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, Beatriz Otero. Because the agency has a dual mission of youth development and public safety, DYRS also participates in many Public Safety and Justice cluster activities and initiatives under the leadership of Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice, Paul Quander.



In FY2011, DYRS served 1,269 youth who were committed to the agency's custody. These young people, aged 13 to 20, received services along a continuum of care ranging from secure confinement at New Beginnings to community-based supervision and support services such as Global Positioning System

(GPS) tracking, mentoring, and job training.

DYRS also provided supervision and services to 954 detained youth awaiting court appearances. Approximately two-thirds of these young people participate in the District's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) and receive supervision in a community-based setting such as a shelter home. In FY2011, 93% of DYRS youth completed their detention alternative without a re-arrest or a failure to appear in court. Detained youth who require a higher level of supervision stay at the Youth Services Center (YSC). There were, on average, 76 youth at YSC each day in FY2011.

## The DYRS Approach

DYRS' approach to its work is based on three core concepts: protecting public safety, promoting Positive Youth Justice (PYJ), and practicing effective management. These three principles must work in concert if the agency is to truly meet its mission.

As the cabinet-level agency primarily responsible for steering court-involved young people away from previous delinquent behavior and onto the right track, DYRS is at its core focused on protecting public safety. For the population of young people DYRS serves, research shows that the best long-term strategy for enhancing public safety is to follow the principles of PYJ. Engaging young people in productive ways, linking them with caring adults, and helping them meet their developmental needs is the most effective method for directing youth away from criminal behavior and toward a positive adulthood. Public safety and PYJ are, in a fundamental sense, complimentary, mutually reinforcing outcomes.



As DYRS pursues these interconnected goals, the agency takes seriously its role as a steward of District resources. For this reason, the agency works diligently to encourage effective management with respect to operations, finances, service delivery, and performance. Through strategic and thoughtful spending of resources, the agency seeks to maximize its positive impact on young people's lives and the overall well-being of the larger community.

## Promoting Positive Youth Justice

DYRS programs and services are grounded in PYJ, an approach that emphasizes that youth are assets and resources to the community and that with the right programs, opportunities, supports, and services, youth can develop to their full potential and be much less likely to continue delinquent behavior. In FY2011, DYRS launched a number of initiatives designed to address the six core PYJ developmental domains of work, education, relationships, community, creativity, and health. These six domains were selected based on research demonstrating that these types of activities are the most effective in causing youth to desist from delinquent activities.<sup>1</sup>

**Job Training:** In FY2011, DYRS used \$1.2 million in Department of Labor (DOL) grant funds to expand its education and workforce development programming. With the help of the DOL

grant, the agency doubled the number of workforce development specialists who assist youth with job coaching, career planning, and placement in internships, long-term employment, occupational training, post-secondary education, and enrollment in the military. In the community, the DC YouthLink initiative helped connect 200 youth to job readiness training, and DYRS partnered with Sasha Bruce Youthwork to implement a comprehensive occupational training program that leads to industry-recognized credentials and employment referrals.

In partnership with the Institute for Educational Leadership, DYRS and DC YouthLink received a three-year grant of over \$600,000 from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to develop DC RAMP, a career-focused mentoring program. DYRS also partnered with the DC Department of Disability Services to connect youth with disabilities to workforce training.

**Educational Services:** DYRS increased its number of academic specialists and partnered with DC Public Schools (DCPS) to enhance transition services and academic placement assistance for youth released from secure facilities. Within the community, DC YouthLink helped connect 265 youth to educational support services such as tutoring. During FY2011, DYRS and the See Forever Foundation implemented an enhanced community workforce programming and integrated learning program at the Maya Angelou Young Adult Learning Center (YALC). This school-based workforce development program supports students' academic goals by offering GED preparation while providing hands-on employment training and practical work experience. During FY2011, 22 DYRS youth were enrolled in post-secondary education programs such as colleges and universities, community colleges, and technical schools.

At New Beginnings, the See Forever Foundation's Maya Angelou Academy received particular recognition during FY2011. In their accreditation of the school, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education declared the school a "model" program. The *Jerry M.* education evaluator described the school as "one of the best programs in a confinement facility" she had ever seen, and deemed the school's turnaround "remarkable."

**Physical and Mental Health:** In FY2011, DC YouthLink helped connect 190 youth to health services within the community, a 2.5 times increase since FY2010, when 79 youth were connected to such services. At New Beginnings and YSC, youth receive physical health, mental health, and substance abuse screenings upon enrollment. New Beginnings operates the Seven Challenges Substance Abuse program, which serves an average of 30 youth twice per week. Also at New Beginnings, in FY2011 Sasha Bruce Youthwork administered a four-week program educating youth on sexual health issues. The facility also hosted a 'Winter Olympics' in which youth competed against each other in a variety of physical challenges, with the top finishers receiving medals.

**Relationship Building:** The agency has increased participation in programs designed to build positive relationships between youth, their families, and other caring adults. In FY2011, DC YouthLink connected 517 youth to relationship-building services such as mentoring, more than double the number from FY2010. At New Beginnings, over 30 families participated in an Awards Assembly/Open House, the largest family participation ever for a New Beginnings event.

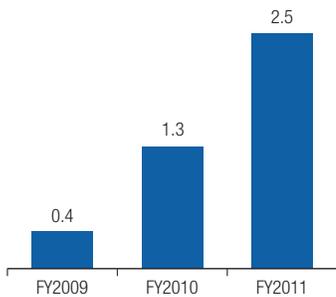
**Community Engagement:** In FY2011, youth in the community performed community service, participated in cultural



activities, and were linked to programs aimed at building leadership skills. At New Beginnings, community organizations hosted workshops, presentations, and field trips for youth relating to issues such as positive decision making and African-American history. Youth at New Beginnings also performed landscaping work for senior citizens in Ward 5, and DYRS is working with the DC Office on Aging to expand this program in FY2012. New Beginnings also organized a successful basketball team that competes in the DC Charter School League.

**Creativity:** DYRS has expanded its programming aimed at channeling youth creativity toward positive, productive outlets. During the past year, youth at New Beginnings had the chance to rehearse a play with the Shakespeare Theater and participate in an Authors in Schools program. Also in FY2011, YSC formed its first ever band and choir programs.

**Average Count of Support Services Received by Youth While in a Community Placement**



DC YouthLink. To improve service delivery at New Beginnings, the facility restructured its housing unit to enhance therapeutic services, expanded incentives for positive behavior, and increased the number of volunteer vendors.

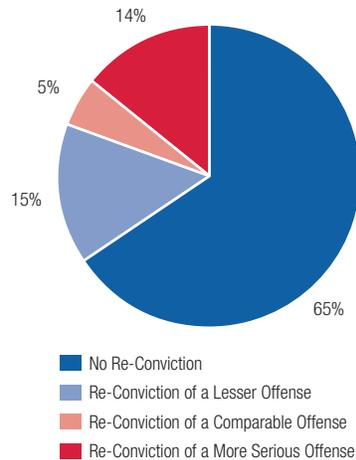
Many of DYRS' initiatives that are grounded in PYJ principles, such as DC YouthLink, are still relatively new. The agency looks forward to expanding the outcomes that it tracks and reports as more data is collected on these initiatives.

## Protecting Public Safety

Protecting public safety is core to the DYRS mission. The agency is dedicated to reducing the likelihood that youth will re-offend, either while in DYRS custody or after, and DYRS' programs and services are designed to help achieve this goal. In FY2011, DYRS implemented a number of initiatives aimed at improving public safety.

**Reporting on Public Safety Outcomes:** DYRS has taken strides to build upon the information already available to the public regarding public safety outcomes for the youth DYRS oversees. This report presents new recidivism data for DYRS

## Recidivism & Harm Reduction



committed youth. The data show an overall recidivism rate of 35% since FY2004. Eighty percent (80%) of the youth committed to the agency in that time were either not convicted of a new offense within a year of community placement, or were convicted of a lesser charge than their initial committing offense.

In FY2011, seven youth under DYRS custody were arrested on a ho-

micide charge, representing less than 0.6% of the total number of youth committed to DYRS over the fiscal year. Nine DYRS youth—or just around 0.7% of the total DYRS committed population—were victims of homicide in FY2011.

Over the course of FY2011, the average number of youth on absence status was 6.1%—down a quarter from the previous year. The median length of stay for youth on absence was 11 days, down 50% from FY2010.

**Supervision and Monitoring:** DYRS dramatically increased the number of youth who receive GPS monitoring, from zero youth in FY2009, to 26 youth in FY2010, to 570 youth in FY2011. The agency has also partnered with the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) to locate youth on absence and is implementing an online absence reporting system in collaboration with the DC Office of Unified Communications (OUC). These efforts have helped make DYRS' response to absconders more immediate and reduced the number of youth on absence to its lowest rate in three years.

**Safety at DYRS Secure Facilities:** DYRS uses Performance-based Standards (PbS), an evaluation tool developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA), to benchmark its facilities' safety against juvenile justice facilities nationwide. By the end of FY2011, both YSC and New Beginnings had more direct care staff and fewer injuries per youth than the national average. New Beginnings implemented a number of security upgrades during FY2011, including adding more monitors to the control room and establishing a Safety and Security Council. With support from the Executive Office of the Mayor and City Council, the District of Columbia government reprogrammed a total of \$1.95 million for safety and security enhancements at New Beginnings, including new doors and locks on all housing units, personal security devices for Youth

Development Representatives, and improved perimeter security. The capital improvement work at New Beginnings started in FY2011 and will be completed in FY2012.

**Information-Sharing Initiatives:** In an effort to improve inter-agency communication and better coordinate the District’s response to delinquency and crime, DYRS implemented data-sharing initiatives with other public safety agencies such as MPD, the DC Office of the Attorney General (OAG), and the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA). This includes data exchanges with MPD in which the agency alerts MPD each time a youth with a history of committing serious offenses is placed in the community. In partnership with MPD, DYRS also conducted a mandatory call-in for committed youth aged 17 to 20 to review the agency’s expectations and services.

**Promoting Effective Agency Management**

DYRS is dedicated to being a good steward of public money by continually improving its effectiveness in operations, management, finances, and administration of services and programs. In FY2011, DYRS launched a number of initiatives to promote effective agency management.

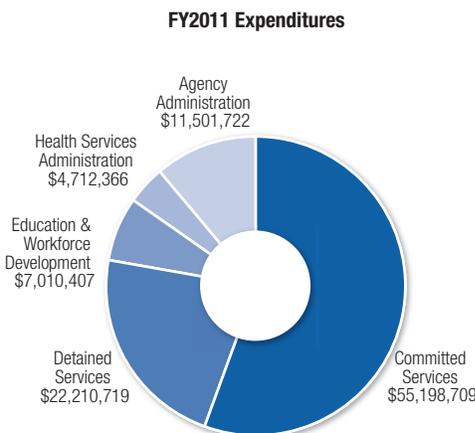
**Facility Operations and Population Management:**

Through improved data sharing between DYRS and sister agencies, the average daily population at YSC has sharply declined. During FY2011, YSC was over its 88-bed capacity only 4% of the year and had zero days during which the population exceeded 100 youth. This is a marked turnaround since FY2010, when YSC operated above capacity during 55% of the year and had populations exceeding 100 youth during 32% of the year. DYRS has also reduced administrative barriers and increased efficiencies to lower the awaiting placement population at New Beginnings, ease facility overcrowding, and deliver better services to youth in DYRS custody.

**Oversight of Community-Based Service Delivery:** The agency is implementing a system to improve the monitoring of DC YouthLink program operations, outcome measures, and

program quality. Additionally, during FY2011 DYRS staff and DC YouthLink providers improved data entry procedures and practices. These trends are available to the public in the DC YouthLink Quarterly Performance Reports, which provide a level of data on community-based services for committed youth that is unprecedented among state-level juvenile justice agencies nationwide.

**Staff Retention and Recruiting:** DYRS initiated an aggressive recruiting, hiring, and retention campaign that resulted in a decreased turnover rate and over 20 direct care staff hires since January 2011. DYRS is also working to reduce overtime expenditures and decrease the number of staff unavailable for duty. The agency has launched efforts to improve staff morale and development at New Beginnings, including an Employee of the Month program, quarterly Superintendent Town Hall meetings, enhanced staff training opportunities, and a Human Relations Council.



**Progress on the Jerry M. Work Plan:** In FY2011, the Court vacated three Work Plan requirements, related primarily to educational services at New Beginnings and exercise requirements for youth at both DYRS facilities. These vacatur more than double the number of indicators that have been removed from the Work Plan since the inception of the *Jerry M.* lawsuit.

**Cost-Saving Strategies:** In partnership with the Department of Health Care Finance and other District agencies, DYRS established a task force to vigorously pursue Medicaid funding. This initiative will allow important services to continue while leveraging existing federal funds and reducing the overreliance on local funding. The agency also utilized federal grant funds, such as the \$6.1 million DOL grant awarded in FY2009, to continue existing services and administer new programs such as enhanced GPS monitoring, development of a residential girls' program, and expanded vocational training.

## Looking Forward to 2012

In FY2011, DYRS made significant improvements across all of its service domains. The agency enhanced its programs and services promoting PYJ and expanded its initiatives that specifically target public safety, all while working with greater efficiency and increased oversight. Over the coming fiscal year, DYRS will target the following areas for improvement:

- ▲ Advancing PYJ principles in all DYRS activities
  - Enhancing job preparedness for older committed youth
  - Strengthening youth linkages to school when they return from residential placement
  - Expanding substance abuse and mental health opportunities for DYRS young people
- ▲ Protecting public safety in and around the District
  - Reducing youth recidivism
  - Reducing abscondences rates
  - Improving oversight of the District's community-based residential facilities
- ▲ Effectively managing public resources to maximize the agency's impact
  - Reducing reliance on residential treatment centers
  - Increasing the use of evidence-based programs
  - Lowering overtime usage

Through each of these endeavors, DYRS is committed to improving the lives of the District's court-involved young people, and in so doing making the community safer today and into the future.

## Endnotes

1 Butts, J.A., Bazemore, G., & Meroe, A.S. (2010). *Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Juvenile Justice.