



2015

COMMUNITY REPORT

"RESETTING PERSPECTIVE"

CLINTON LACEY, DIRECTOR



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REHABILITATION SERVICES

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2015 Community Report

“Resetting Perspective”

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As an integral part of the District of Columbia’s juvenile justice system, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) is afforded the opportunity to transform the process of healing, rehabilitation and restoration in our court-involved young people and their families. To successfully sustain such positive change, the process demands a force more powerful than fear, desperation or the desire for better outcomes for our youth and families. A true juvenile justice system transformation needs to rest firmly on a foundation of love - love for our youth, families, neighborhoods and overall community. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said that true justice is in reality “love correcting that which revolts against love.” So if Dr. King is correct in his assertion that justice is love in action, then we must ask ourselves the question: “What does love look like in our juvenile justice system?”

DYRS is working toward the answer. We believe that love is comprised of core elements: care, compassion and commitment, with an emphasis on identifying and developing our young people’s strengths. For us, love is not coddling, nor is it enabling. Love at DYRS means driving our youth to take responsibility for their thinking and actions, as they develop the self-respect, fortitude, discipline, coping skills and overall capacity to navigate the world around them in positive and productive ways. In short, this love mimics the full array of support that any caring and invested parent would provide for their own children. This is the standard we are setting at DYRS.

Of course, we cannot pursue these goals alone. We are grateful for the immense support we receive from our sister government agencies, the Committee on the Judiciary led by Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie, our Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Brenda Donald, and our Mayor, Muriel Bowser, who established a vision for a safer, stronger Washington DC with clear pathways to the middle class. We are also greatly strengthened by an array of community-based organizations, advocates and neighborhood leaders who work tirelessly to serve and support our youth and families. We are thankful for our staff, whose hard work and dedication do not go unnoticed. Finally, we are inspired and guided by the young people and families with whom we partner on a daily basis, to weave hope, support, resources and opportunity into the fabric of our communities.

In the forthcoming pages, you’ll find a sampling of the incredible work completed by our staff and youth during 2015. This is by no means comprehensive, but we want all our stakeholders to know that these accomplishments are building a foundation to make DYRS the leading juvenile justice agency in the country.

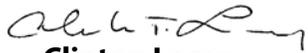

Clinton Lacey
Director, DYRS

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The Road to Achievement: A Snapshot of Accomplishments in 2015

Here, We Believe in...

Positive Outcomes

- 30+ youth obtained unsubsidized employment.
- 12 youth transitioned into the colleges of their choice.
- 10 youth graduated with high school diplomas, while two young people obtained GEDs.
- 303 youth connected to service providers throughout the District through DC YouthLink.

Making Progress

- DYRS reached a partial settlement in *Jerry M.* litigation due to sustained improvements in the agency's performance (see page 9), in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General's aggressive litigation strategy.
- Our Office of Research and Evaluation completed a submission for the 2015 INDICES publication, promoting open government and agency transparency, and continues to post statistics on the agency's website.
- New Beginnings participated in more extracurricular/vendor programs than ever, building upon all six domains of the Positive Youth Justice framework (PYJ).

Collaboration Across Communities

- Grammy Award-winning entertainer John Legend visited our downtown Achievement Center as part of and in support of his #FreeAmerica campaign to end mass incarceration.
- We partnered with the DC Department of Employment Services to host Summer Youth Employment Program interns.
- DYRS and Court Social Services partnered on a Youth Crime Prevention Call-In Forum.
- New Beginnings management teamed up with the DC Department of Health and its Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Administration to become CPR and Emergency Preparedness certified.
- Our Contracts and Monitoring division partnered with the DC Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) to enhance performance-based outcomes for Community-Based Residential Facilities.
- The DYRS Health and Wellness team executed a National Nutrition Month event at the Youth Services Center (YSC), with resources provided by the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education.



Seizing Opportunity

- DYRS youth attended the appearance of Pope Francis at the Capitol's West Front during the pontiff's first ever visit to the United States. Juvenile justice reform advocate Congressman Tony Cardenas provided the youth with tickets, wanting to give our young people the chance of a lifetime.
- Our young people and staff members interacted with panelists at the state and national level in a White House forum – "Girls of Color and Intervening Public Systems: Interrupting the Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline".
- DYRS youth and staff participated in "Justice and Opportunity: The Power of the Arts" - an event at the White House focused on the influence of various art forms in youth rehabilitation - in October as part of National Youth Justice Awareness Month.



Our Programs Make Progress

For Our Youth

The DYRS Office of Education and Workforce Development is constantly seeking out opportunities for our young people, whether in providing accredited education classes and tutoring in the community, or in partnering with local businesses and service providers to offer internships, employment and professional certifications.

Education and Workforce:

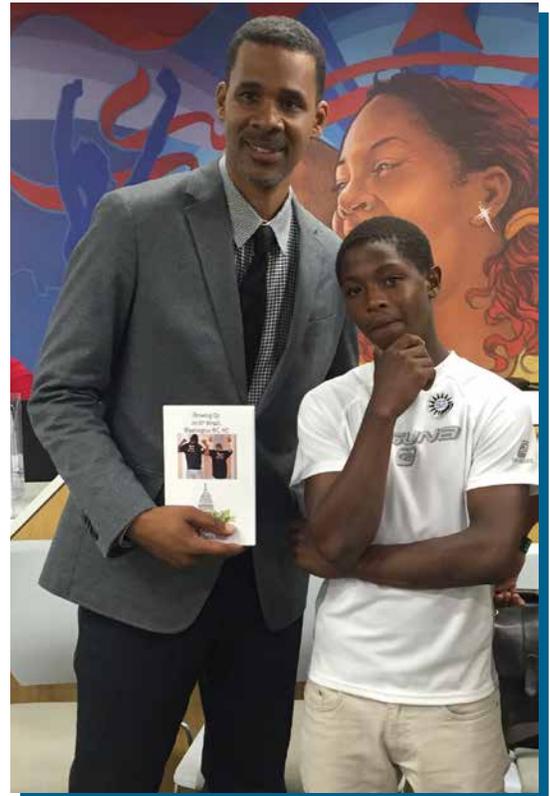
- Supported 12 youth into transitioning into colleges and universities in the fall. The scholars' choices included Delaware State University, Winston-Salem State University, Florida A&M University, Montgomery County Community College and the University of the District of Columbia.
- More than 30 youth obtained unsubsidized employment - 28% in labor positions, 25% in the food and beverage industry, 19% in retail, 13% in other categories, 9% in hospitality, 3% in the professional arena and 3% in healthcare.



- Two scholars who attended Maya Angelou Academy at New Beginnings had books published.
- Created a college support program for youth who transitioned or will transition into college. The program has an incentive plan component which rewards youth for successfully completing academic semesters. The retention component of the program offers a structured follow-up system outlining strategies for youth who attend college, to help youth graduate and complete their academic pursuits.
- Hosted several college tours to introduce youth to post-secondary education opportunities. Along with East of the River Clergy-Police-Community Partnership (ERCPCP), we facilitated a college tour to Philadelphia during the spring with six youth.
- We worked with students from American University to host a college boot camp for seven young people to review the tenants that make up a successful college student.

Family Engagement

DYRS understands that the role of a youth's parent or caregiver is the most important one in their rehabilitation. It is the parent/caregiver who is with youth throughout the process and assists them in transitioning out of their DYRS commitment. That's why we offer options and programs to ensure every young person has the best chance possible at a complete and successful rehabilitation.



- **Family Engagement Microsite** - Our Family Engagement team launched a microsite – www.ourdyrs.org - for parents and families of committed youth to guide them through what to expect throughout the commitment process.
- **Family Welcome Gathering** - The inaugural DYRS Family Welcome Gathering took place in February 2015 and now occurs every other month. Developed with multidisciplinary DYRS staff members and parents of committed youth, it is designed to provide a more thorough orientation to commitment and a safe place for youth and families to: get answers to their questions; learn about DYRS and DC YouthLink services and resources; and talk with previously committed youth and their families. The session itself is mostly facilitated by parents and concludes with one of our youth sharing their journey in their own words.
- **Youth, Family, Staff Circle** - In existence for one year, the "Youth, Family and Staff Circle" is a restorative justice process developed to engage the distinct perspective of youth, family members and DYRS staff on issues important to them as well as advise on improvements to the agency.
- **Anchored in Strength** – 44 parents and family members of committed and post-committed youth, community members, DYRS and The National Center for Children and Families staff members participated in the third annual "Anchored in Strength" conference this year. Parents and family members enjoyed a peaceful environment, built a support system comprised of others who shared common experiences, discovered new strengths while stretching their comfort zones and explored strategies to meet personal goals and build better relationships with their children.

“Summer in the Capital”

Sponsored by the Achievement Center, along with DC YouthLink lead agencies - The Progressive Life Center and The National Center for Children and Families - DYRS youth participated in a variety of programming this past summer that touched on different domains of the PYJ framework. Offered programming included customer service training, TV and audio production training, a Zumba program, interviewing techniques, financial literacy, a music recording clinic, pottery, culinary arts, a digital arts clinic, fitness and martial arts, basketball, theatre, music, spoken word and community service. Parents also had an opportunity to provide structured feedback and share their thoughts and suggestions for services offered through DC YouthLink during a “Parents Night Out.”

For Our Staff

DYRS understands the importance of providing its staff with tools to be effective leaders. We owe it to our youth to provide them the best workforce possible. The agency launched the below opportunities this year to promote employee development and youth excellence.

- We partnered with George Washington University’s Center for Excellence in Public Leadership to bring the “Leadership Academy” to the agency and assist our staff in becoming the next leaders in juvenile justice. The academy is designed to accelerate careers for both frontline and management staff.
- We moved toward trauma-informed care, offering training for solution-focused, holistic care to youth and families across our city.
- Our Case Management division implemented a quarterly on-site continuing education program for staff through partnership with CEYou, a program that offers continuing education credits for licensed social workers.
- Our Risk Management Services division ensured that all specialists are trained on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s standards for general industry, that all line staff is trained on safe environmental conditions, and that Office of Internal Integrity Investigators are trained in the Prison Rape Elimination Act.
- The Department of Youth and Family Programs implemented Case Management and Booster academies.
- The Family Engagement team employed trainings to develop skills and approaches toward youth and families with a strengths-based perspective.
- Our Culinary staff attained recertification in “Servsafe” (food and beverage safety) training.

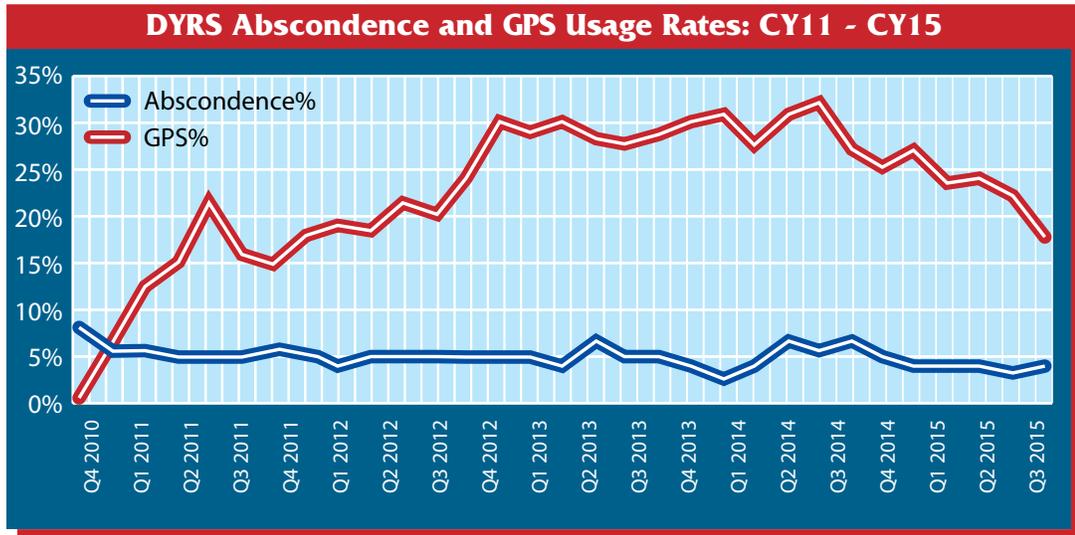


For the Community We Serve

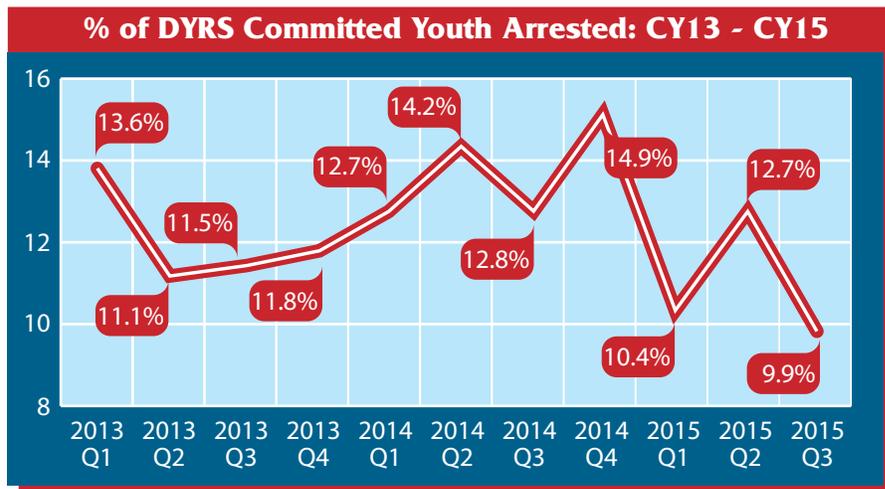
DYRS is committed to public safety through community engagement and positive youth development. We also believe in increasing community awareness of the measures we are taking to ensure a safer, stronger DC, such as:

- **DC YouthLink.** DC YouthLink is an initiative that connects youth with community support and services where they live, while ensuring effective supervision. Our achievements in this area are that our public safety metrics have improved, and youth are demonstrating a positive transition into adulthood. Youth are achieving success in education, social relationships and workforce development.

- **The improved tracking of our youth.** Back in 2003, we could not account for almost 25% of our youth. Today, through aggressive strategies using real-time data and the assistance of external stakeholders like the Metropolitan Police Department, this number is under 5%. DYRS is committed to ultimately eliminating abscondence.



- **The number of youth rearrested.** DYRS is considered the “deep end” of the juvenile justice system, which means we have to move swiftly and aggressively to prevent future offenses. And while an arrest is not a conviction, monitoring the data is still an important indicator of whether youth are complying with their Community Placement Agreements.





The Grass Cutting Project

Every summer for the past six years, DYRS collaborates with the DC Office of Aging and the DC Department of Environment to identify elderly citizens who need their lawns cut. With the assistance of DC YouthLink vendor Career Path, our DYRS youth assist the elderly. "The premise behind the program is that the more youth are exposed to positive influences in their community - and build multi-generational relationships - the less likely they are to commit a crime," said the project lead. How's that for a lesson in Positive Youth Justice?

Collaboration Across Community

DYRS believes in community-based outreach, engagement and collaboration. From celebrities to stakeholders to sister agencies, we partner with others to find innovative ways of furthering the agency mission.

- We welcomed entertainer John Legend to our Achievement Center in April to learn more about the agency's efforts in providing youth with opportunities to move beyond the juvenile justice system. It was Legend's first stop in Washington DC on his #FREEAMERICA tour focusing on ending mass incarceration.
- Director Lacey shared his vision for the agency in an interview with community radio host Kojo Nnamdi on "The Kojo Nnamdi Show."
- OAG honored four DYRS youth at its inaugural "Right Direction Awards" in August. They received awards from Mayor Bowser and Attorney General Karl Racine for showing significant self-improvement, serving as role models to other youth and affecting positive change in their communities.
- Our Contracts and Monitoring division partnered with sister agency CFSA to enhance performance-based outcomes and evaluations for Community-Based Residential Facilities. The evaluations are intended to enhance DYRS oversight, promote vendor accountability and accurately measure program performance.
- Entertainer Traci Braxton engaged with youth at YSC as part of the Vital Alternatives for Healthy Minds Program (VAMP), an expressive therapy program that utilizes the arts as a way to build mindfulness and social/emotional development skills.



Change from Within

After getting an overview of the agency and taking in a wealth of information and feedback from staff at all levels and across all divisions, Director Lacey made expanding internal and external communications - and listening to staff ideas - an invaluable part of planning the agency's course toward reaching core goals and objectives. This year:



- The Director held town halls at all DYRS facilities to discuss and address staff concerns and challenges.
- The Office of Communications and Public Affairs created a biweekly newsletter - "Committed to Excellence" - highlighting the agency's work for both internal and external stakeholders.
- Senior management started an ad hoc staff committee tasked with identifying and implementing ideas to build and sustain employee morale.
- DYRS hosted an employee basketball tournament in which 25 staff from all DYRS facilities participated in a structured league, building sportsmanship and stronger relationships.
- Senior management initiated "Positive Staff Development Days" at all locations, where employees, auxiliary staff, visitors and vendors participated in organizational culture training.
- **The agency restructured the Office of Human Resources, reemphasizing our commitment to effective employee customer service. The contributions of the Office of Human Resources' various subsets are listed below.**

Recruitment

- Brought on several new hires to serve the agency's mission and vision, aligning talent with departmental need and improving on future staffing pattern planning.
- Initiated promotions to staff that previously hadn't been afforded opportunities for growth.
- Launched a Youth Development Representative (YDR) Hiring Fair, offering twenty-five members of the community a pathway to the middle class.
- Added experience equivalency to YDR positions, removing an education-only barrier that sometimes barred otherwise extremely qualified staff.
- Launched the first-ever streamlined pilot internship program for DYRS, onboarding seven interns to date.

"The job fair was incredible," said Supervisory Youth Development Representative Felicia Brown. "As I participated in the interviewing process, I felt the positive energy flowing throughout the room. I admired the posture of the staff, and I heard the enthusiasm, love for the job and pride...I could tell that everyone felt valued and a sense of belonging. The staff was ecstatic and felt their voices were finally heard. Thank you, thank you and thank you. There are no words to express the gratitude that each of us feel. We are excited about the direction that the agency is heading in. Please know that we strive for excellence in performing the duties that we have the privilege to carry out."

Onboarding

- Onboarding added a second day of orientation to enhance a better understanding of DYRS policies, resulting in an increased positive feedback rate from new hires.
- Onboarding worked with the Office of Communications and Public Affairs to improve the agency intranet, making it a valuable and resourceful tool for new employees to learn information.

Employee Relations

- Made improvements on the FMLA/PFL tracking metrics and communications, ensuring eligible staff members receive prompt approval and payment.

Taking Initiative

With our continuum of care. The DYRS Health Services Administration brought home more awards than any practice in the District of Columbia at the Department of Health (DOH) Annual Vaccines for Children Award Ceremony, which recognizes practices throughout DC that excelled in compliance with maintenance and administration of vaccines. DOH recognized New Beginnings for completion and accuracy of temperature logs, a major requirement for ensuring safety of the vaccines administered to our youth, and the Youth Services Center for both completion and accuracy of temperature logs and timely submission of program-required reports - making it one of two centers throughout the entire District to receive both awards.

In defining dedication. DYRS employs staff who positively engage youth in school guidance, treatment groups, recreation and self-development. In addition to assisting our young people with various structured activities, our employees explore opportunities for our youth that promote a productive life after their commitment is over.



Youth Services Center (YSC)

- A full-time Supervisory Youth Development Representative (SYDR) ensured YSC staff compliance in mandatory "recertification training," increasing compliance from the 20th percentile to the 90th percentile in one year.
- A YDR acted as a guest speaker at "The Street Law Program" at George Washington University for the tenth consecutive year. The program teaches basic criminal law to law students interested in working with youth that are in pretrial, detained status. The YDR saw a need for the program at YSC after realizing that some of our committed youth didn't understand their upcoming legal proceedings.
- YSC staff successfully facilitated a life skills group - "how to tie a dress tie 101" - to teach young men proper etiquette on tying a suit tie and dressing for a job interview.
- Our youth and staff participated in a therapeutic dance session that first focused on discipline and structure. As the gathering continued, many young women let go, and had breakthroughs that allowed for healing, bonding and laughter.
- Young women at YSC participated in "Dear Daddy," a program for girls to mend their broken relationships with their fathers.



New Beginnings

- New Beginnings management and residents took part in a forum in February that focused on bridging the gap between black males and police officers. Three MPD police officers spoke to the youth about their roles in the community and ways to communicate with officers. Residents also had the opportunity to ask questions and learn about new laws, in an effort to promote a positive perspective on police officers' responsibilities and emphasize their focus on community safety.
- New Beginnings brought vendor programs with the University of the District of Columbia, Career Path and PAXEN to the facility. These programs focus on preparing residents for the working world and returning to the community, concentrating on interactive work experience, computer soft skills and job readiness. The vendors offer hands-on programming in career choices such as plumbing, construction and carpentry, janitorial and landscaping skills. Residents also create resumes and perform mock job interviews.
- Scholars in the New Beginnings Maya Angelou Academy participated in its 6th Annual Power Unit speech competition, an event that teaches youth the importance of expressing themselves through spoken words and highlights just how powerful a speech can be. Judges looked for criteria such as eye contact, posture, inflection and presence.



The Achievement Center

- Our young people in the community attended our Quarterly Networking Breakfasts, engaging with more than 50 employers, providing employment opportunities and internships.
- A young man in the Achievement Center's TV Production Program participated in news coverage of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.
- With support from The White House Council on Women and Girls and the Domestic Policy Council's Urban Affairs, Justice and Opportunity team, and advocate Campaign for Youth Justice, our youth participated in two events at the White House and took part in the Pope's inaugural visit to the United States.

Jerry M – 30 Years in the Making

Jerry M. is a class action lawsuit brought against the District on behalf of the youth confined at the former Oak Hill Youth Detention Center. In order to resolve the *Jerry M.* litigation, the District initially entered into a Consent Decree and subsequently entered into a Work Plan - a court order that contains specific exit criteria based on the requirements of the 1986 Consent Decree that the District must satisfy in order to resolve the lawsuit.

Since the Work Plan's initial approval, several performance requirements have been met or removed from the Work Plan via the parties' settlement. Due to significant progress made by the District in improving conditions in the DYRS secure juvenile facilities; the parties reached a settlement this year that would allow substantial portions of the case to be dismissed in an effort to limit Court supervision to those areas most crucial to life, safety and health.

While some goals are still under the supervision of the court, DYRS is consistently working towards meeting the requirements of those remaining Work Plan goals in order to successfully end this 30-year-old lawsuit.

Our predecessors were tasked with the difficult job of standing up a new agency and changing an ingrained culture.

They achieved this goal by shutting down Oak Hill, focusing resources on community and partnerships, and implementing a Positive Youth Justice framework, placing the agency in a much better position to serve our youth and their families.

By holding youth accountable for their thoughts and actions, but equipping them with the tools and resources they need to mold their own lives, DYRS provides an opportunity for positive transformation. By supporting the accomplishments of our youth, and offering programming and experiences that can lead to positive outcomes, the agency pushes forward to create a different narrative.

In 1985, the pendulum veered toward circumstances and a mindset so severe that it nearly led to a court takeover of the District’s juvenile justice system. But today, the DYRS principle is to enforce love in juvenile justice. And all employees involved in vacating *Jerry M.* are a part of this paradigm shift.

Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services



Introducing the 2016-2017 Strategic Plan...

A detailed overview of our goals, approach and objectives for the next two years.



