

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES



Testimony of
Neil A. Stanley, Interim Director
Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services

**Public Oversight and Performance Hearing of the
Committee on Human Services**

Wednesday, February 16, 2011 at 1:00pm

Introduction

Good Afternoon Chairman Graham and members of the Human Services Committee. For the record, I'm Neil A. Stanley, Interim Director for the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services. Thank you for the opportunity to offer remarks on behalf of the staff, youth, and families served by our agency.

It has been a privilege to work with the Council on many different occasions over the years. First, as Interim Director with the Department of Parks and Recreation, then as Deputy Director with the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Chief of Staff with the Department of the Environment, and more recently as the DYRS General Counsel since 2008.

I've served in my current role as DYRS Interim Director for just two months, but during this short time I've had the great pleasure of meeting, learning, and receiving guidance from you, members of your Committee as well as a cross section of key public safety partners across the city. I'm especially thankful for the leadership of Deputy Mayor Paul Quander. Mr. Quander has been accessible to me around the clock and is firmly committed to ensuring that DYRS is properly resourced. He regularly provides strategic management guidance, but it's also typical

for him to simply call and say, “Neil I’m just checking to see if you are alright and whether there’s anything that you need from me.” This type of support from the Executive Office of the Mayor has facilitated a strong start for DYRS this year and reflects Mayor Gray’s sincere commitment effective public management.

Before continuing, I’d like to sketch the course of my testimony. First, I think that it’s important to chart a brief historical perspective of DYRS. Second, we’ll share a status report on the agency’s performance during fiscal year 2010. Although I was not the agency head for any portion of fiscal year 2010, there’s a lot to talk about. Equally important is where we stand today in terms of our challenges and successes. Finally, I’d like to share our management team’s vision for the remainder of this fiscal year and beyond.

Historical Perspective

Since its inception in 2005, the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) has made several significant improvements and is often regarded as a promising model agency. I will briefly summarize how we got here, and how DC’s juvenile justice system has overcome the challenges it has faced.

For decades the District had one of the most notorious juvenile justice systems in the country. It wasn’t until a class action lawsuit filed in 1986 that resulted in a consent decree brought the issues of how youth were fairing, and their poor outcomes to the forefront. Unfortunately, little progress was made over the next twenty years. By 2004, the situation was so bad that lawyers for the children were poised to file a motion for receivership, which would have taken management of YSA to the federal government.

In response to this crisis in 2005, the District government created a cabinet level juvenile justice agency to avoid receivership. The establishment act forming the agency was forged by a consensus through the Blue Ribbon Commission on Youth Safety and Juvenile Justice Reform, which mapped the road we are on today.

Today, we are seeing the benefits from choosing this path. Notable examples of DYRS improvements we have seen over recent years include.

Modernized facilities and programs:

- Closed the outdated Oak Hill Youth Center, which previously housed both committed and detained youth, and replaced it with two state-of-the-art facilities; and
- Implemented best practice behavior management programs at each facility.

Enhanced the continuum of rehabilitative care:

- Added over 360 community placement and supervision options for committed and detained youth (e.g., Evening Reporting Center, Electronic Monitoring, Therapeutic Family/Group Homes);

Improved safety and security:

- Abscondence rate reduced from 26% in 2003 to 5% today; and
- Developed Partnership for Success, a joint initiative with Metropolitan Police Department that provides enhanced and coordinated supervision and support for the highest risk youth.

Improved workforce development opportunities for youth:

- Secured a competitive \$3 million grant from the US Department of Labor to expand workforce development and alternative education opportunities for committed youth.

For these hard-won improvements, DYRS has earned praise from independent experts. For example:

- The plaintiffs' attorney in Jerry M., in rescinding their longstanding motion to place DYRS in receivership said, "We have seen more progress toward compliance in the last two years than we did in the previous 20 years."
- DYRS was named as a Top 50 Program award from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in 2008. We were selected from a pool of nearly 1,000 applicants.
- The Maya Angelou education program for model unit residents at New Beginning was called one of the "best programs" in a correctional facility ever seen by the court monitor's education expert; its transformation, from one of the nation's worst programs to one of its finest, was characterized as "remarkable."

- In May, 2010, USA Today praised DYRS' reform efforts in an article entitled "For D.C., hope in treating young offenders."
- We've also successfully completed candidacy for the Performance Based Standards (PbS) system of the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators. PbS is being implemented in 197 facilities across 27 states.

Our goal has been to dramatically improve our continuum of care, making neighborhoods safer while re-connecting youth to their families, communities and futures. Our consistent vision has been to create decent and rehabilitative secure care *and* develop a continuum of community-based care for youth under our supervision that is second to none in the nation. We have accomplished a great deal in the last six years, but we still have many important goals to reach.

As you know, the *Jerry M.* lawsuit was filed against the District of Columbia in 1986: We were cited for violations of basic health and safety standards at the agency's Oak Hill facility and for a lack of community programs. After 22 years under the *Jerry M.* consent decree and with little success in achieving its requirements, DYRS negotiated a **Final Work Plan** in 2008. The Work Plan established concrete indicators and requirements that, once fulfilled, would release the agency from *Jerry M.*

The Work Plan is subdivided into Twelve Goals. Each goal consists of specific indicators of success that must be met by the agency. The Court-appointed **Special Arbiter**, Grace Lopes, is charged with evaluating the agency's performance against the standards established in the Work Plan. In the materials sent to your office in preparation for this hearing, DYRS analyzed Work Plan compliance and grouped the indicators into five primary categories. We reported that:

1. 31% of the indicators have been vacated;
2. 6% are motions pending motions to vacate;
3. 5 % are currently under review by the Special Arbiter;
4. 38% of the indicators are Ready for Review;
5. 20% need improvement, prior to being reviewed by the Special Arbiter.

Fiscal Year 2010 Performance

Now that I've shared a bit of our agency's history, I'd like to highlight some of the major DYRS program accomplishments in fiscal year 2010:

- Implemented the university-based, staff-secure program to serve committed girls - DYRS secured funding to pilot a University-Based Girls Program (UBGP), a local, staff-secure, residential treatment and reentry initiative for eight committed girls ages 15-20. Through this initiative, girls advance academically, learn about the dangers of substance use and risky sexual behaviors, decrease exposure to dating violence, heighten self-esteem, foster conflict resolution and coping techniques, and improve life skills._
- As of January 2011, the Lead Entities have participated in more than 300 Youth Family Team Meetings, with approximately 400 youth enrolled in community-based programs. In 2010, DYRS also established an internal Financial & Programmatic Oversight Team: This team is developing and implementing a system for monitoring program operations and ensuring program quality.
- Improvements in Youth Services Center operations
 1. Significant reduction in the rate of critical incidents (down 19%), youth on youth assaults (down 11%), youth on staff assaults (down 30%), and injuries to youth from assault (also down 30%).
 2. Achieved above 94% compliance with Classification/Housing Assignment within the required 72-hours, over approximately 33% compliance year prior
 3. Successfully implemented a behavior incentive program, to augment standard recreation activities and token economy.
- Improvements in Health Service Administration operations
 1. Developed a business unit that is working to maximize Medicaid Reimbursements for a projected savings of over 30% when compared to 2009.
 2. Changed its medical staffing for an overall savings of over half a million dollars.
 3. Developed a trauma focused curriculum for New Beginnings.
- Enhancements in agency data management systems and data collection - DYRS has leveraged data management platforms to increase agency efficiency and improve the accuracy of agency data. Tracking staff availability, training levels and deployment is

now done faster and more reliably. On a daily basis, our staff are finding new ways to use these systems to do more with less.

Positive Youth and Professional Development

We are continuing our efforts to establish Positive Youth Development as a foundation for our work. However, the infusion and influence of PYD can only be sustained through the ongoing professional development of all staff. Staff training and development is one of my short term priorities and I am pleased to announce that two DYRS employees are now certified as trainers in Advancing Youth Development (AYD) through the Children and Youth Investment Trust and the Academy for Educational Development. This certification allows DYRS to deliver the AYD curriculum directly to our staff.

Workforce Development

DYRS was awarded a U.S. Department of Labor Local Young Offenders Implementation Grant in July 2009. The purpose of the grant is to expand educational, workforce development and employment opportunities for adjudicated youth. The grant targets DYRS youth, ages 14-21, who are reentering the community after release from Residential Treatment Centers, New Beginnings, or Group Homes.

Our accomplishments with the U.S. Department of Labor funding include:

- Placing over 85 youth in **subsidized internships**
- Establishing a **comprehensive occupational skills training program** –
- Implemented **enhanced workforce programming and integrated learning program at the See Forever Transition Center.**
- Hired two **Academic and Transition Specialists**

With this grant, DYRS is well on its way to ensuring a workplace opportunity for every youth committed to our care and custody; and most important, the opportunity for a second chance to become productive citizens of the District of Columbia.

YouthStat

For a second consecutive year, DYRS has used the YouthStat performance management process to improve the quality of its service delivery. Through the establishment of monthly data-driven meetings with agency executives, YouthStat meetings have created a forum for data-driven strategic thinking about the agency's key performance shortfalls. Since January of 2009, YouthStat meetings have focused primarily on service delivery at our two facilities. Over the last year, the agency has improved performance across all 12 of the Jerry M focus areas. The YouthStat process was also applied to the pressing issues of awaiting placement and overtime usage. In short, YouthStat continues to be a driver of positive change for the agency, and will figure prominently in our current and future efforts to improve services outside of the facilities.

Service Coalitions

In 2010, we fully implemented community-based "service coalitions." - DYRS enhanced its core service delivery strategies for committed youth by empowering its Lead Entities, the East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership (ERCPCP) and Progressive Life Center (PLC). These are highly regarded local, non-profit organizations that bring a tremendous amount of experience, commitment and dedication to this initiative. They have long standing positive reputations for designing, organizing, managing, and brokering a spectrum of services, supports, and opportunities through community-based service providers. A sampling of these services includes, mentoring, tutoring, workforce development, vocational training, arts/music programming, sports and recreation, parenting support, and third-party monitoring.

Agency Challenges

Against this backdrop of impressive gains, fiscal year 2010 also proved very challenging period for DYRS.

During this time the agency experienced major transitions in its executive leadership. Specifically, the agency began 2010 with a permanent Director, Vincent N. Schiraldi, who had

served the District for over five years. He was then was selected by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to be the Commissioner of Probation. Marc Schindler, then the agency's Chief of Staff, was named Interim Director by former Mayor Adrian Fenty and then in July 2010, Mayor Fenty named Robert Hildum as DYRS Interim Director. At the very end of 2010, I was appointed to serve as Interim Director of the agency.

These transitions in executive leadership have strained agency managers and staff. However, the agency's current leadership team is a very capable and talented group of skilled managers with a great deal of experience in juvenile justice, youth services, and public management. I would like to take this opportunity to thank DYRS front-line staff for their dedication and commitment. I would also like to acknowledge and show my deep appreciation to managers and staff across the agency. I very much look forward to working with each of them, our executive team, with you Council Member Graham and other national and local stakeholders as we strive to become the best juvenile justice agency in the nation.

With this in mind and since being appointed Interim Director on December 22nd, I have prioritized the agency's short-term goals and committed to spending the next ninety days focusing on the most pressing issues facing our agency. These include: public safety, positive youth development and good governance. DYRS defines these as follows:

- **Public Safety:** the tactics, strategies and work the agency engages in to reduce the likelihood that a young person will reoffend;
- **Good Governance:** that tactics, strategies and work the agency engages in to improve how we deliver all of our services;
- **Positive Youth Development:** the tactics, strategies and work we use to ensure that all youth are connected to the services, support and opportunities needed to successfully transition to adulthood.

I will now outline some of the work we are engaged in under these priorities:

Public Safety

- = Global Positioning System (GPS) Program – DYRS now monitors 125 youth in the GPS Program. We have more young people on GPS than ever before, we have improved the technology we use, and we are moving faster when young person isn't where they are suppose to be. This unit also works directly with case managers for youth who are in non-compliance and who haven't been making curfews. When youth are not compliant, staff are immediately notified.
- = Absconders - We have improved our staffing, our response time, and reduced the rate of youth we have on abscondence. We have created a senior management position for public safety on this work, and improved our partnership with MPD to bring these youth in.
- Revalidating Risk Assessment Tool - The Annie E. Casey Foundation is funding the National Center on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) to revalidate our risk assessment tool.
- Case Planning & Management – In January DYRS launched a Community Integration Improvement (CII) Team to provide comprehensive and uniform guidelines for case management and community supervision practices for youth committed to DYRS
- Public Safety Partnerships (CSS, CSOSA, MPD, CJCC)- We have made it a priority to fully collaborate with our public safety partners. In recent weeks CSOSA has detailed one of its senior Branch Chiefs to DYRS to provide guidance on our community supervision strategies. We are partnering with Court Social Services (CSS) to better serve the District's youth. We are also working very closely with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) on contract and facility monitoring, community and public safety outcomes, and reentry services.

I just learned earlier this week and am pleased to share with this body that DYRS will be awarded the Chief of Police Agency Recognition Award from the Metropolitan Police Department. In addition, one of our own staff Mr. John Mein has been named as a recipient of the Chief of Police Medal of Merit. He and the agency will be recognized at MPD's 11th Annual Awards Ceremony on February 17, 2011 at Gallaudet University. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chief Lanier and all the dedicated officers on her staff. These awards mean

a great deal us and go a long way in strengthening our partnerships and opening the lines of communication among DYRS direct care staff and front line MPD officers.

Positive Youth Development

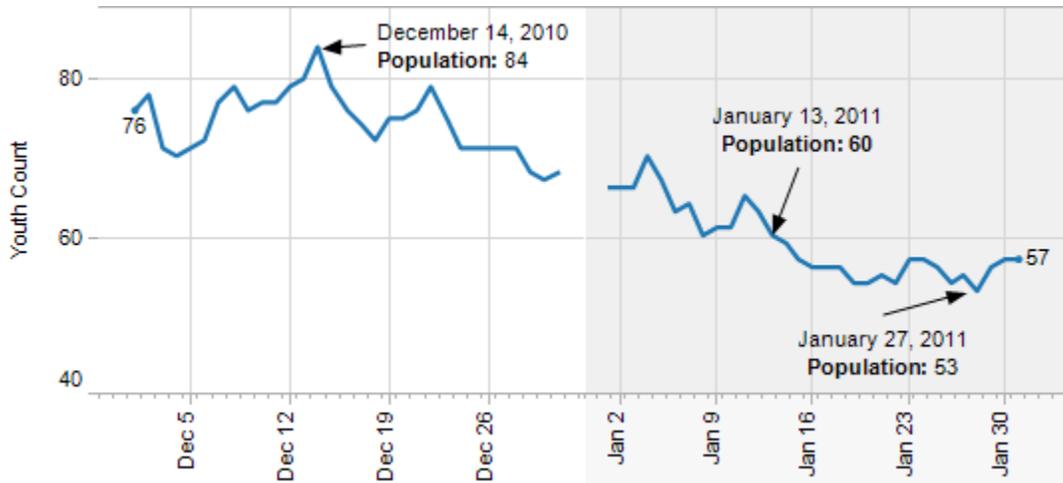
- *Parent & Family Engagement* –We are establishing a parent group (council) to work with DYRS on reviewing materials to be used for parents/families, along with identifying and recommending parent support services that may be needed.
- *Gender Specific Programming* - We are working to complete solicitation of vendors with the Office of Contract & Procurement: This will include training and technical assistance services, evaluation services, workforce development, life skills, substance abuse prevention and treatment.

Good Governance

- *Lead Entity Financial Management & Programmatic Oversight* – We've established an internal Management Oversight Team, re-established monthly joint meetings with Progressive Life Center, East of the River Clergy Police Community Partnership, and Children Youth Investment Trust Corporation; and, finalized the 2011 Lead Entity Grant Agreement.
- *Staffing & Workforce Development* – DYRS is in the process of establishing a DYRS Leadership Academy, Case Management University and Staff Development curriculum through the DYRS Office of Training and Professional Development.
- *Recruitment and Retention* – The Human Resources Department has developed an aggressive recruitment plan to fill all direct care vacancies: That plan includes a series of Open Houses and an agency sponsored job fairs. DYRS has recently received approval from DCHR Director Judy Banks to work with her staff to conduct onsite interviews and make conditional job offers with expedited start dates for qualified and exceptional applicants.
- *Facility Operations & Administrative Efficiencies*
In January 2011 DYRS established an Awaiting Placement Triage Team to assist with the continued awaiting placement population issues. By creating this Triage Team, DYRS has centralized in one location all duties necessary to efficiently move youth to their permanent placement. The preliminary results have been promising. In one month the

awaiting placement population has dropped dramatically. *See below chart on the New Beginnings population.*

New Beginnings Population (Dec. 2010-Jan. 2011)



DYRS also implemented an Awaiting Placement Behavior Management Program (BMP) at New Beginnings in late December 2010. The BMP has proven to be popular with residents and staff have reported fewer incidents. The program incentivizes positive behavior through differentiated evening programming activities and is conducted from 3pm to 5pm Monday through Friday each week. The program is designed to cut down on idle time and features interactive presentations involving behavioral health, medical, public defender service and other New Beginnings staff.

- Medicaid Funding Strategies (DMH, CFSA, DHCF, DHS, DDS, and APRA etc.) - DYRS will work collaboratively with the Executive Office of the Mayor and other agencies to coordinate a Citywide Summit to examine across-the broad Medicaid issues that affect all relevant District agencies. The Summit will examine how Medicaid dollars can best be leveraged for eligible services.
- Enhanced Oversight of Community Based Care - I have directed DYRS's Office of Research & Quality Assurance (QA) to bring its expertise in performance management, which contributed significantly to the improvements at both DYRS facilities over the past several years, to bear on the care of youth in the community. Research & Quality Assurance staff have begun working with our Case Management

staff to develop platforms for data-driven performance management for our Case Management system and outcome-focused accountability for the care we provide to our youth. This Spring, Committed Case Management will be incorporated into the same rigorous YouthStat accountability system that has proven effective at New Beginnings and the YSC.

In addition to the short term goals outlined above, I am also developing longer-term plans and goals for the agency in an inclusive process known to DYRS staff as the Service Improvement Planning (SIP) initiative. The initiative was launched in January and is designed to achieve significant, measurable, and sustainable improvements in staff, parent, and youth satisfaction with the programs and services provided by our agency.

The SIP Initiative will involve four major phases:

- (1) **Agency Review** – this includes collecting input from staff, youth, parents, strategic partners, and community stakeholders.
- (2) **Strategy Formulation** – this includes reviewing all the collected feedback, writing narrative findings statements about the data collected, setting and prioritizing agency goals, and defining improvement areas.
- (3) **Strategy Implementation** – this includes designing action steps, establishing timelines, identifying service improvement teams, and setting progress and monitoring goals.
- (4) **Evaluation and Continuous Improvement** – this includes measuring results, tracking the progress of the service improvement teams, and continually evaluating and making course adjustments based on the outcomes and feedback received after initial implementation.

Beginning February 1 and through the end of this month, our Office of Training and Professional Development has been conducting focus groups with randomly selected staff throughout the agency. In an effort to hear from a wide range of staff and to ensure all perspectives are considered, comment cards have also been placed at all DYRS facilities as well as on the DYRS Intranet. In the coming weeks we will also be inviting community partners, service providers, parents, and public officials to focus groups to get their perspectives as well.

Concluding Remarks

I would like to also say that I very much appreciate the concerns expressed by Council, community members and others regarding public safety and youth violence around the city. Any time a young person in the District is accused of or involved in violent crime, particularly when it results in the senseless loss of life, it is a tragedy of monumental proportions for our entire community and I absolutely take responsibility for doing all we can at DYRS to minimize the chances of this occurring. I would also like to express my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the youth who were recent victims of homicide. We are working extremely hard to improve our supervision, services and supports for the young people committed to our care and custody by the D.C. Superior Court.

At DYRS we continue to ask ourselves if my children were in trouble, what systems would we design to hold them accountable, turn their lives around, and make our communities safer? I believe that as long as we keep that as our guiding principle, we will succeed.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to partnering with you in advancing our agency's reform efforts and creating a juvenile justice system of which DC residents can be proud, and I am of course happy to answer any questions.