



THE DYRS APPROACH: DC YOUTHLINK AND COMMUNITY-BASED REHABILITATION

April 2013

General Approach

DC YouthLink is at the forefront of a national trend in positive, community-based services and placements for youth committed to a juvenile justice agency. The three main objectives of DC YouthLink are to:

- Connect DYRS youth to services, supports, and resources that help them succeed in a community setting;
- Enhance public safety by promoting DYRS youths' rehabilitation through positive, structured activities and enhanced supervision; and,
- Re-invest in community-based organizations to create safe, strong environments that support youth where they live.

Youth Success

Since its inception, DC YouthLink has grown from serving fewer than one in 10 youth of the overall DYRS population to serving approximately half. In its first three years, DC YouthLink has:

- Served over 1,100 youth.
- Connected over 700 youth to positive adults, over 450 youth to workforce training, over 300 to educational support services, and over 150 to family support and reunification programming.
- Provided opportunities that allowed DYRS youth to receive approximately 140 professional certificates and more than 75 high school credentials. In addition, 19 have enrolled in post-secondary education, more than 150 participated in a subsidized internship, and 54 were employed.

Community Safety

The numbers show that DC YouthLink effectively promotes public safety by intensively engaging youth. For example:

- The recidivism rate for community-based youth has fallen 12 percentage points, from 42% to 30%, since the launch of DC YouthLink.
- The percent of youth connected to DC YouthLink who were re-arrested fell seven percentage points between FY2011 to FY2012, from 27% to 20%, respectively.
- The number of DYRS youth on abscondence fell 41% between FY2010 and FY2012.

Re-investing in DC

Since its launch in October 2009, DYRS has invested its resources in approximately 50 local groups supporting court-involved youth through DC YouthLink, money that might otherwise have been spent on out-of-state residential placements for these youth. DC YouthLink's local service providers have added new jobs and new skills in our City's neighborhoods.

Looking Ahead

While DC YouthLink's results have been encouraging, DYRS plans to build on these successes and respond to challenges with DC YouthLink in fiscal year 2014 by focusing on:

- *Enhanced Service Delivery and Accountability:* We anticipate that DC YouthLink will become stronger and more strategic, specifically in the areas of service delivery, accountability, evaluation, and capacity building. We have reviewed DC YouthLink's financial model and are introducing an outcomes-based payment structure for the Service Coalition.
- *Competitive Process for Selecting Service Coalition Members:* We will continue the open and competitive process to select new Service Coalition members that we began last year and intend to release an RFP for new Service Coalition members in April for the upcoming program year starting on October 1st. Through the RFP process, we continue to ensure that highly-qualified organizations are serving our youth.
- *Evidence-Based Practice Models:* We are increasingly requiring that our service providers adopt best practices and evidence-based practice models. For instance, we are piloting an evidence-based mentoring program in partnership with the Institute for Educational Leadership. This program focuses on well-defined and documented outcomes. Research conducted at Princeton, the University of Illinois, and Child Trends demonstrates that having a navigator or a life coach lowers aggressive behaviors, drug use, and recidivism.