



Media Release

Contact:

**Amy Webb, Director of Communications
(501) 682-8650**

For Immediate Release

November 20, 2012

DOJ Says Division of Youth Services Met or Exceeded Goals in Consent Decree

The U.S. Department of Justice says the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Youth Services (DYS) has met or exceeded all requirements outlined in a federal consent decree and has filed a joint motion asking a judge to release the agency from court supervision.

In March 2003, then Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee and top DHS officials signed the settlement agreement with the Justice Department after the federal agency documented problems at the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center (known then as the Alexander Youth Services Center).

“The center and the services offered there have improved dramatically over the last several years,” said DYS Director Ronald Angel. “There are fewer youth, a new contractor running the program, a new school and enhanced educational and behavioral health services.”

Since the agreement was signed, Angel has reduced the number of youth at the center from 143 to 100. DHS Director John Selig thanked Angel for spearheading the transformation of the center and said youth in state custody are better off because of the work he and his staff have done.

“Ron was hired for his strong leadership skills, and he didn’t shy away from any task,” Selig said. “He analyzed all the issues and hired the right people to fix them.”

Angel’s staff and the contractor running the center, G4S Youth Services out of Florida, have made dozens of changes and improvements focused mostly in three areas: education, mental health service and suicide prevention.

Today, there are an adequate number of special education teachers at the center and all teachers are licensed in their subject area and maintain a “highly qualified” status. The center can now issue diplomas and has access to a state educational database so students’ educational records can be kept up-to-date.

In addition, DYS used American Recovery and Reinvestment Act money to build a new educational facility equipped with the latest electronic teaching aids and a new library, and now provides students’ access to the Arkansas Virtual High School.

The center also has a full time psychologist on staff, a contract with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences to provide a psychiatrist, annual suicide prevention training, and every unit has case managers and social workers.