

Arkansas Department of Human Services Juvenile Justice Transformation

The Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Youth Services (DYS) is responsible for approximately 350 youth who are court-ordered into DHS custody each year. The agency is planning a transformation of how it delivers services to these youth, including a continued focus on individualized treatment plans, rebalancing between residential placement, group homes, and community-based services, and a heightened focus on family and community reintegration. This transformation will occur in phases. Phase I will begin in November 2018 and extend to June 2020.

- **The chief focus of the initial phase of transformation is to make sure youth ordered into DHS care receive the most appropriate treatment quickly and receive services in the least restrictive setting.**
 - Goals to accomplish by June 30, 2019 include:
 - Eliminating delays to complete assessments and DHS placements, increasing dedicated assessment beds, and reducing/eliminating use of juvenile detention centers pending DHS placement.
 - Developing treatment plans that are individualized and tailored for each youth.
 - Engaging family members and aftercare providers, who will ensure the youth's successful return to the community, from the outset for treatment planning.
 - Regularly reviewing treatment progress, required at least on three-month intervals
 - Providing progress reports of treatment to treatment team stakeholders.

- **Least restrictive settings most often involve home and community-based settings, which requires a rebalancing of treatment placement options. In Phase I, milestones set to accomplish that include:**
 - Reducing number of DHS residential facilities from 5 to 7.
 - Colt will close and merge with Harrisburg to close by June 30, 2019.
 - Dermott (11-17) juvenile treatment center will close by June 30, 2019.
 - Creation of an all-female treatment center at Harrisburg to tailor treatment needs
 - Expanded group home and specialty provider beds, doubling the number currently available.
 - New contracts for residential and community services will aim to expand the geographic availability of group home placements in the state.
 - Infrastructure investments and improvements will be made to facilities.
 - Additional vocational programming and options for older youth.

- **Family Engagement and Community Supports are necessary to ensure success after treatment.**
 - The majority of youth in DHS custody are there for non-violent offenses. Invariably, they will return to their homes and communities.
 - To ensure that's successful, family and community partners, such as aftercare providers and members of the judiciary, need to be involved in the youth's treatment from the beginning and be able to track the youth's progress throughout their time at DHS.
 - New contracts that begin July 1, 2019, will prioritize and include family engagement metrics, timely field evaluation expectations for providers, emphasize quality outcomes for youth, and continue to provide diversion funding for community-based treatment options.