



Media Release

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DHS Forges Unique Juvenile Justice Partnership with Shorter College

Program offers college credit to youth at residential facility as a bridge back to community

Youth at the Arkansas Juvenile Assessment and Treatment Center now have the opportunity to receive college-level instruction and credit through an agreement with Shorter College, the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) Division of Youth Services (DYS) and college officials announced today.

This is the first time youth in the juvenile justice system in Arkansas have been given access to on-site, college-level instruction led by a credentialed professor. DYS Director Marcus Devine said national research consistently shows that the lack of educational attainment and economic opportunity are major barriers to successful reintegration into the community and the prevention of recidivism.

“This new public-private partnership will help address both these issues and will bridge the gap between youth who have been committed to DYS and the opportunity to pursue a higher education,” said Devine. “This could be life-changing for some of our youth who thought they would never get a chance to earn a college degree.”

The program started June 1. A professor from the private, two-year, historically black liberal arts college situated in North Little Rock, goes to the Treatment Center four times a week to teach. Currently 10 youth are enrolled in classes. Though the Treatment Center is in central Arkansas, it serves youth from all across the state.

Participating students must have already earned a high school diploma or GED before enrolling. They can earn up to 12 college credit hours during the summer and 9 hours during the Fall and Spring semesters. Shorter College offers academic programming toward the Associates of Arts Degree in Basic Studies. Students can choose to concentrate in one of 5 areas: General Studies, Christian Leadership, Child Development, Entrepreneurial Studies and Criminal Justice.

Once students transition out of the Treatment Center, they are able to complete their degree program at Shorter College or transfer their credits to other colleges across the state of Arkansas through the Arkansas Credit Transfer Program.

“We believe that this partnership gives this youth population a chance to embrace the opportunities that life offers beyond the decisions of their past,” said Dr. O. Jerome Green, Shorter College President. “It is our desire that doors be opened for them through this program that will assist in their transformational process. Shorter College’s programming includes a concentration on what we call, “The Four C’s”—Character, Culture, Competency and Citizenship”.

DYS works with youth who come into contact with--or are at risk of coming into contact with--the juvenile justice system. The Division serves thousands of youth each year through community-based programs and residential treatment facilities.

Shorter College was founded by and is affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The college's mission is to provide accessible, affordable and high quality education for students to accomplish their academic or career goals by offering programs that meet the learner's needs in a challenging and nurturing Christian environment.

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