

Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice

House Rural Development Council

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Presented by:
Margaret Cawood,
DJJ Legislative and Community Liaison

Mission Statement

The mission of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is to transform young lives by providing evidence-based rehabilitative treatment services and supervision, strengthening the well-being of youth and families, and fostering safe communities.



Juvenile Court Process

Juvenile Court Process guides decision points of supervision and custody.

- DJJ involved youth:
 - Informal status
 - Probation
 - Committed
 - Home -Community
 - Residential
 - Youth Development Center



Youth Served In FY 2022

- Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDC):
 - 6,111 youth admissions (736.5 average daily population)
 - 49% of youth on Mental Health Caseload
- Youth Development Campus (YDC):
 - 284 youth admissions (233 average daily population)
 - 65% of youth on Mental Health Caseload
- Community Service Offices (CSO):
 - 7,434 youth served
 - 6,824 youth served in the community



SECURE FACILITIES



Secure Facilities

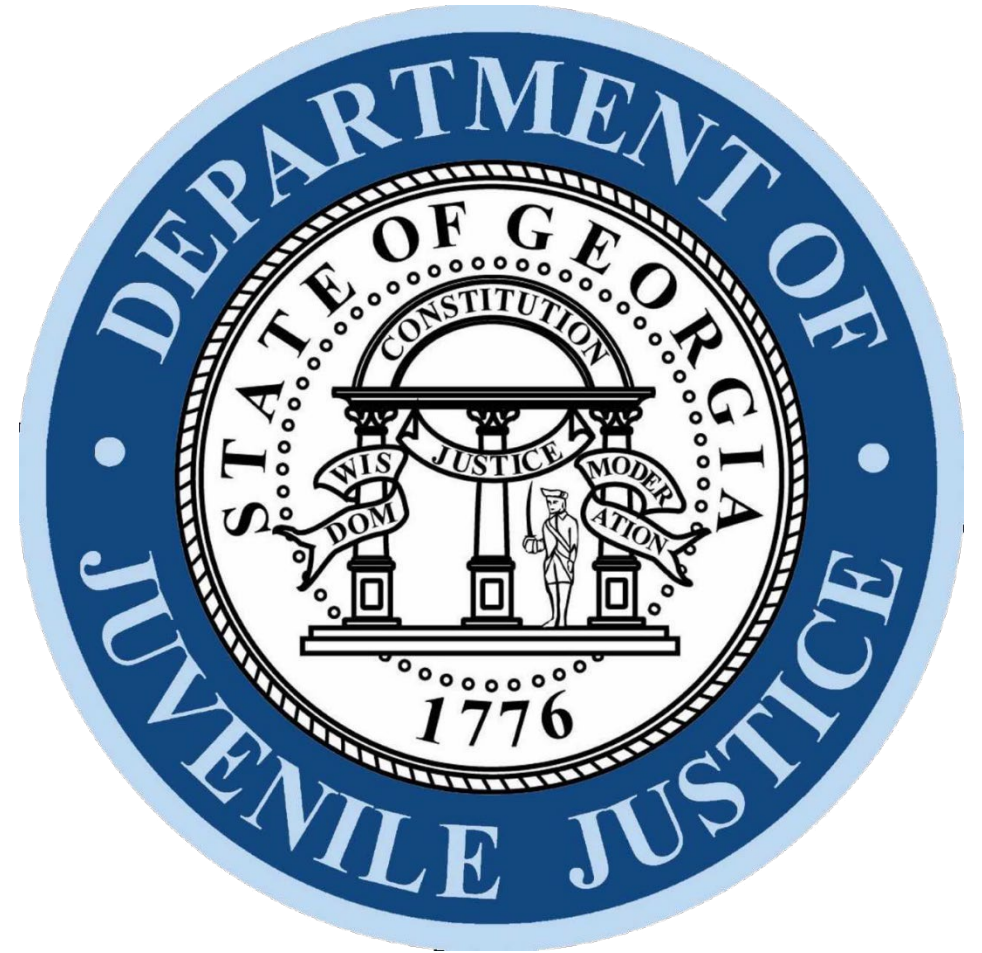
The Department's Division of Secure Facilities oversees 19 Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDCs) and 6 Youth Development Campuses (YDCs) throughout Georgia, ranging from 30 to 200-bed capacities.

The RYDCs are secure short-term centers for youth awaiting court to enter the community, placement in the community, or long-term facilities serving youthful offenders. The YDCs are for youth committed to the custody of DJJ for long-term services and treatments.



Secure Facilities

- 19 Regional Youth Detention Centers or (RYDC)
- 6 Rural Facilities - Wilkes, Evans, Crisp, Lauren, Ware, Terrell, and Thomas Counties
- 6 Youth Development Centers or (YDC)
- 2 Rural Facilities - Hancock and Dodge Counties



Rural Facility Challenges

Staffing

- Juvenile Correctional Officers (JCOs) – direct care staff – the highest vacancy rate
- Professional staff (Teachers, Counselors, Medical, and Administrative)
- Eastman YDC (Dodge Co.) has been recruiting for over a year to fill Behavioral Health Counselor positions)



Rural Facility Challenges

- Recruitment and Retention of Employees
- September 2023 RYDC (19) Vacancy Rate was 33%.
- Claxton RYDC (Evans Co.) has a 41% vacancy rate. Of the 51 positions, 21 are currently vacant.
- Thomasville RYDC has a 13% vacancy rate.



Rural Facility Challenges

Other Challenges:

- Access to services and support for youth returning to their community from the RYDCs.
- Public Transportation (staff and youth)
- Professional staff choosing not to live in a rural community – drive in.
- Service staff (food service, maintenance, administrative) financial and personal vulnerabilities.



**COMMUNITY
SERVICE
OFFICES**



Community Services Offices

The Department's Division of Community Services is responsible for intake, case management, probation, detention planning, residential care, re-entry services, and aftercare supervision. In some areas of the state, the Department shares these services with County Juvenile Court staff. Intake is the entry point at which a youth is either diverted from or formally processed into the juvenile justice system. The Division has 78 Community Services Offices.



Community Service Offices

- Community Offices (CSO) - 78
- Rural County CSO (43)
- **81 counties** served by another county CSO
 - McDuffie County CSO serves five surrounding rural counties
 - Ware County CSO serves four surrounding rural counties



Community Service Offices

- Services Provided:
 - Provide juvenile court intake and court-related roles
 - Supervise probated and committed youth in the community
 - Case management of youth in residential, detention, and YDC.
 - On-call responsibilities



Community Service Offices

Rural Challenges – Staffing

- **Recruitment** – Probation officers and Administrative Assistants
- **Advertisements** - producing no or few applicants
- **Retention** – Reasons for resignations
- **Most** – Non-competitive salary
- **Probation** - Long hours and on-call responsibilities.



RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS



Residential Programs

- Committed to DJJ custody
- Court order, assessment, and classification processes have determined that youth's supervision and treatment needs would best be met in a nonsecure residential setting.
- Mostly youth with specialized and or complex treatment needs.
- DJJ contracts with providers and refers youth that meet their admission criteria.
- Share many providers with the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS).



Residential Programs

- In FY 2022, The Division of Community Services provided contracted residential placement services to an average of **164 juvenile justice-involved youth** monthly within 55 residential locations statewide.
- Since 2019, DJJ has not received any new residential provider applications from rural areas.
- DJJ is actively recruiting new providers to expand the number of available beds and specialized services.
- Wait lists result in youth remaining in RYDC and some being pushed to a higher level of supervision (YDC).



Residential Programs

Rural Challenges

- Staffing – Recruitment & Retention
- Limited community resources & services
- Linkage and support of the local school system



REENTRY



Reentry - Returning Youth To Home Communities

Concerns:

- Behavioral Health Services
- Housing
- Employment and supports
- Transportation
- School - Education



**CHILDREN IN
NEED OF
SERVICES
(CHINS)**



Children In Need of Services (CHINS)

- 2013 Juvenile Justice Reform: HB242 – Article 5
- Align with national best practices and research-grounded standards
- Different approach for status offenses (truancy, runaway, unruly)
- Move away from the delinquency model
- Focus on addressing the root cause of behavior and understanding the child's behavior in the context of the family
- Supports, services and treatment
- Limit the use of secure confinement for status offenses
- Dependent on community resources



Youth and Families Challenges

- Access to health and behavioral health services
 - Timely and geographically feasible.
 - Dependent on parent/guardian's insurance
- Transportation
- Positive youth development activities
- Employment and support for parents/caregivers



Youth and Families Challenges

Rural Communities What's Working Well...

- Community that values collaboration, engagement, and inclusion
- View justice-involved youth as “our youth,” not DJJ youth
- Afterschool and positive youth development activities
- Active advisory council (facilities)
- Family Connections inclusion of justice-involved youth
- The school system is inclusive
- Communities in Schools



Summary

- When services and supports are unavailable, children are pushed deeper into the juvenile justice system to access services or supervision (CHINS and delinquent).
- Enhancing protective factors such as prosocial involvement, strong social support, strong attachments and bonds, and a solid commitment to school counter risk factors.
- Adolescents transition successfully to adulthood and the workforce when their physical, emotional, and social development is supported in the context of their family and community.



Questions?

Contact Information:

Margaret Cawood

margaretcawood@djj.state.ga.us

404-210-9017

DJJ Website

<https://djj.georgia.gov/>



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THANK YOU