

An Assessment of the Rhode Island Training School

A REPORT TO GOVERNOR GINA M. RAIMONDO

October 4, 2017



Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families

Dear Governor Raimondo,

On July 27, 2017, you directed me to lead a top to bottom review of the Rhode Island Training School within the Department of Children, Youth and Families after serious incidents involving the health and safety of our youth residents and staff.

These incidents required investigations and warranted an intensive review to identify immediate actions, develop recommendations for intermediate and long-term actions, and ensure we are meeting the needs of both youth and staff and providing a safe and productive environment at the facility.

We focused on enhancing the safety and security of residents and staff, and ensuring that the Training School's services align with youth needs and our mission of rehabilitation and serving youth in a caring environment. We evaluated core areas regarding safety and security, personnel, training, facilities, services, policies and procedures, data management, key partnerships, and communication.

Based on the input we received from our partners and our interactions during this review period, I am pleased to provide you with this report and recommendations that will strengthen the Rhode Island Training School's programs and operations and drive positive outcomes for our youth.

The safety and security of our staff and youth are of paramount importance. Juvenile justice work is difficult, and we need to ensure that our staff have the resources needed to do their work, and that our facilities and programming are up to the task of helping rehabilitate the youth in our care.

Trista D. Piccola

Director

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the Governor’s direction, the Department consulted with multiple stakeholders to gain insight, feedback, and recommendations about how to address serious issues and concerns at the Training School. These regular consultations on safety and security, staffing, leadership, governance, services, facilities management and best practices resulted in a comprehensive set of recommendations for the Training School that includes how best to support and manage the safety and security of residents and staff, and to ensure all services aligned with our youths’ needs in our mission of rehabilitation.

The Department regularly consulted with representation from DCYF leadership, the Training School administration and staff, and union leadership. The Department also worked in partnership with other state agency representatives from the Governor’s Office, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, RI State Police, the Department of Corrections, the Department of Administration, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Capital Asset and Management and Maintenance Division.

In addition, the Department consulted with the following group of advisors who also weighed in on issues related to the Training School:

- Family Court
- Office of the Child Advocate
- Children’s Law and Policy Center
- Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence
- Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Steering Committee
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- RI Coalition for Children and Families

Lastly, we convened focus groups with both staff and youth residents of the Training School to ensure that they had the opportunity to provide their opinions and viewpoints on how to make improvements at the Training School.

The results of the review include a set of key findings, immediate action items, and longer-term recommendations. These recommendations reflect both my vision for moving forward and the collective insights from the stakeholders, advisors, staff, and youth.

KEY FINDINGS

Over the past several years, the Department has made important improvements that ensure enhanced security and better programming at the Training School. While deficiencies at the Training School were identified during this review period, we believe that these challenges are solvable and that this process will accelerate progress on continuous improvement efforts.

In July of 2017, the Training School exited from a federal consent decree, which had been in place for more than four decades. Within the past ten years, two new facilities at the Training School opened: the Roosevelt Benton Youth Assessment Center (YAC) and the Youth Development Center (YDC). These new facilities led to an improved operating environment which was a key component to compliance with the long-standing decree. The accompanying updates to policies and procedures resulted in receiving full accreditation for meeting Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) standards, which focus on programming and rehabilitation for the youth held at the Training School. In addition, the Training School passed the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) audit, further demonstrating progress in complying with best practices.

While we have been improving our facilities, policies and procedures, we also actively expanded community-based alternatives to better serve our youth outside of the Training School, including more options for rehabilitation and community integration. Throughout this review period we identified additional strengths including:

- Standardized tools for assessing mental health, substance abuse, and risk of recidivism have been implemented.
- Critical clinical services for mental health and substance abuse are available and utilized.
- Youth are positive about available educational and vocational programming.
- Staff value relationships with youth and have been positive about training related to safety/crisis management. In addition, recent changes have led to improvements in operations, that allow for rapid mobilization of clinical staff to de-escalate youth and stabilize units.

While several strengths were identified and recognized during this review, areas for improvement were also identified.

Safety/Security

- There were several security system and equipment failures at the Training School because system upgrades are needed.
- Protocols and procedures for managing safety and security need to be added, improved and proactively managed to ensure consistent practice.
- Communications systems and processes need to be improved to ensure that staff receive regular notifications about safety issues or changes in safety and security protocols.
- Behavioral incidents at the Training School require more systematic assessments that will ensure lessons are learned on how to better identify and respond to escalating behaviors of youth in our care.

Leadership/Governance/Personnel

- Inconsistent administrative and supervisory oversight between facilities (YAC and YDC) and among the multiple units in the Training School, and an unclear reporting hierarchy, led to challenges in providing for the immediate safety needs of youth and staff and the best environment for rehabilitation.
- Deficits in staffing, particularly in Juvenile Program Worker vacancies and clinical staff, and approximately 35% of Juvenile Program Workers out on various types of leave, created unsafe conditions for both youth and staff in the two separate facilities.
- The curriculum for the Training Academy falls short of fully preparing new staff to work at the Training School. There is also no process in place for ongoing professional development for all Training School staff.
- Current data collection and reporting is not sufficient to inform the effectiveness of operations and services for positive youth outcomes and staff safety.

Services for Youth

- There is a need to improve the array of programming to meet the needs of the entire population. Programming should address the root causes of conduct by improving access to services that were not reaching all youth at the Training School, specifically youth in detention.
- Additional services in the Training School are needed including services related to gang interventions, family transition for youth leaving the Training School, and better planning and options for placements outside of the Training School.
- Options for vocational/job training are limited and youth expressed interest in pursuing opportunities as part of their rehabilitation.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TAKEN

During the past 60 days, several immediate actions were taken to improve safety, security, leadership, personnel and services. To enhance safety and security, the youth housed at the Roosevelt Benton Youth Assessment Center (YAC) were consolidated into the Training School's primary detention facility, the Youth Development Center (YDC). At the request of the Department, a Captain from the Rhode Island State Police was dispatched to the Training School for immediate safety actions, including on-site daily observations of safety vulnerabilities to mitigate risk. The feedback from the Captain has been provided continuously and actions have been taken to address issues. A plan was also developed and implemented with the Department of Corrections to dispatch additional resources to the Training School to provide support during any significant safety incidents. The Department's Manager of Facilities and Operations was dispatched full-time to the Training School to oversee the assessment of the security system and facilities. These actions allowed for operations to stabilize while enhancing safety and security with current staffing levels.

The Training School Executive Director stepped down and was replaced on a temporary basis by a former Training School Acting Superintendent. Upon the completion of the recent Training Academy, all available positions for Juvenile Program Workers (JPWs) were filled to ensure safety of youth and staff

at the Training School. With the support of the RI State Police, regular command staff meetings were maintained and a new safety advisory committee was created.

Lastly, to ensure the provision of the appropriate level of service and supervision, an immediate behavioral risk assessment of all residents detained at the Roosevelt Benton Youth Assessment Center (YAC) was completed. These assessments were later used to identify clinical intervention plans for the detention and female youth to address the youth's rehabilitation needs. These immediate actions combined provide a stronger base for continued progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS and NEXT STEPS

The following high-level recommendations and next steps are supported by additional details throughout the report. Overall, the recommendations are consistent with our approach throughout the review period and lead to a better operating environment to manage the safety and security of residents and staff, and to ensure all services align with our youths' needs in our mission of rehabilitation.

Safety/Security

- Maintain the consolidation of all youth in one building, the Youth Development Center, while the Division of Capital Asset, Management and Maintenance performs needed repairs at the Youth Assessment Center.
- Finalize contingency plan in the event of unanticipated increases in the census and update the continuity of operations plan in the event of facility disruption.
- Complete upgrades to the security system and sprinkler systems that were related to the recent incidents and finalize a plan for ongoing maintenance of these relatively-new facilities.
- Embed existing and newly developed safety protocols, and track adherence through monthly reporting to the Director of the Department.
- Improve consistent active and real-time communication with staff through existing and newly-established structures.

Leadership/Governance/Personnel

- Through a comprehensive selection process, hire a new, permanent Executive Director for Juvenile Justice Services.
- Hold regular staff and youth forums to promote health and safety, professionalism, respect and guidance to youth to support their rehabilitation, and to foster collaboration.
- Maintain sufficient staffing levels through a process of continuous recruitment and hiring.
- Finalize an updated and comprehensive curriculum for new Juvenile Program Worker training academies, update a comprehensive onboarding process for all new staff, and create a structure for ongoing professional development for all staff at the facility, including a mechanism for tracking completion of training requirements.

Services for Youth

- Continue systematic reviews of youth to ensure no youth spends additional time in the Training School when it is not warranted.
- Invest in critical unmet services that were identified including:
 - Gang intervention
 - Family and young adult transition preparedness
 - Temporary community placement alternatives, with an early emphasis on female youth
- Expand options for educational, job/vocational training, and recreational programs for youth residing at the Training School.

ADDITIONAL OVERSIGHT AND EVALUATION

DCYF commits to the following actions to ensure progress is made on the findings and recommendations included within this report:

- Convene the JDAI Steering Committee no less than bi-monthly to track all approved recommendations through completion and invite additional technical assistance for further review and recommendations for improvements to the Training School as needed.
- Provide assessment within one year that considers how the Training School is meeting its goals of successfully reintegrating youth back into the community to understand the effectiveness of Training School operations and interventions.
- Task the current Acting Director and new Executive Director to develop a reporting plan on the progress of these recommendations to ensure items are implemented and barriers to continuous improvement are addressed.

HISTORY OF THE TRAINING SCHOOL

The Rhode Island Training School is a highly structured, secure facility where youth are placed by order of the Family Court for findings of waywardness or delinquency. When youth require detention at the Training School, the Department is expected to ensure that youth exit the Training School with education, skills, and supports to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. The Roosevelt Benton Youth Assessment Center (YAC) was opened in January of 2009, followed by the opening of the Youth Development Center (YDC) in April of 2009. The Training School is open 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, and provides housing, education, food services, medical and mental health care, and other services for youth in our care. The facility has approximately 135 staff, who work in a variety of correctional, medical, clinical, educational, and culinary positions.

Also under the umbrella of DCYF's Juvenile Correctional Services is Juvenile Probation and Parole, which supervises adolescents placed on probation by Family Court and provides home-based and residential care, dependent on youth needs, for adjudicated juveniles who require care with less security than the Training School. The goal of each of these services is to re-integrate and/or maintain youth in their homes and communities and reduce the risk of re-offending. Youth placed in-home have access to an array of community-based services and are delivered in collaboration with family and other community support partners. Youth placed in residential/congregate care also have access to residential programming aimed toward re-integration into home and community in collaboration with family and community partners.

FEDERAL CONSENT DECREE

In July of 2017, the State of Rhode Island exited from a federal consent decree, which had been in place for more than four decades to address concerns at the Training School, demonstrating significant progress in efforts to improve the environment and programming. In 1971, a group of youth at the Training School sued the state officials who ran the institution in an effort to improve the conditions of their confinement at that facility. In 1973, the parties entered into a Consent Decree that addressed Plaintiffs' concerns including overcrowding, a deteriorated and inadequate physical plant, insufficient staffing, and inadequate academic, vocational, and physical education programs.

In 2000, the Parties agreed to four new requirements that Defendants would comply with as part of the Decree. The four new requirements were as follows:

- Completion of the construction of a new facility to house and provide the required programming to the residents or renovation of the existing facility such that either the new facility or the renovated existing facility is adequate and sufficient to meet all housing, educational and programming requirements contained herein and meets all standards of the American Correctional Association (ACA) for juvenile correctional facilities.
- Development and full implementation of a revised Policy and Procedures Manual that shall be annually reviewed and revised and continuously maintained in full force and effect by Defendants.
- Full continuous implementation of the administrative grievance procedure developed with the assistance of the Master that will constitute an enduring non-judicial means of handling residents'

complaints including a Defendant-developed process for handling resident grievances that is agreed by the parties to be effective.

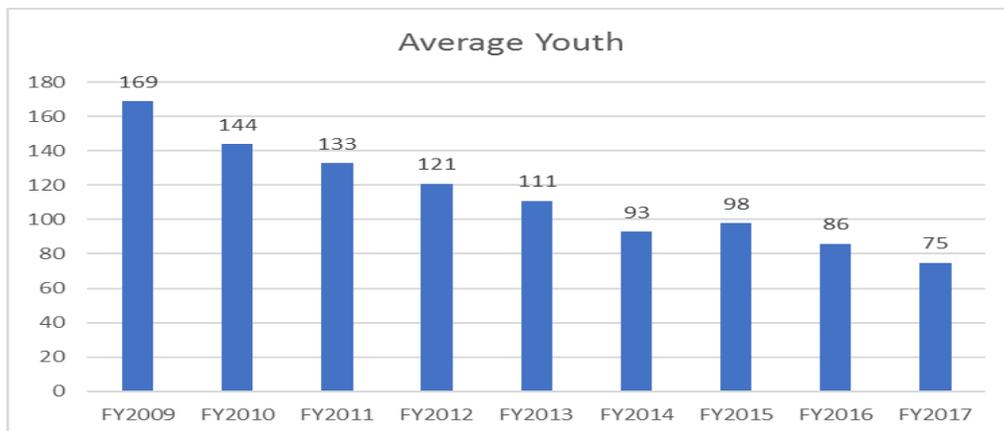
- Full accreditation of the Rhode Island Training School for Youth by the American Correctional Association (or successor organization recognized as being the authoritative professional association setting standards for conditions of confinement of juveniles), which accreditation shall be obtained and continuously maintained at all future times by Defendants.

On April 15, 2014, the Special Master reported to the Court that the Rhode Island Training School had achieved “substantial compliance” with three of four requirements. The only outstanding item was full accreditation. The Court acknowledged that JDAI (Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative) standards are better for the youth held at the Training School because they have a greater focus on programming and rehabilitation. Importantly, since the original Consent Decree, Rhode Island partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which developed the JDAI standards, and committed to embracing the new, stronger best practice standards, and other model juvenile justice policies and practices. Rhode Island is now compliant with the JDAI standards.

CENSUS

At the time of the opening of the existing Training School facilities in 2009, the youth census was over 150. Today, the census is 62 youth.¹ The decline in the census coincides with both a decline in the State’s population and a decline in the number of juvenile arrests. In addition, the State of Rhode Island has been part of a Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) since 2009. The focus of the JDAI initiative is to promote better outcomes for youth through the utilization of community based alternatives for youth. The JDAI initiative is facilitated by Kids Count and is a collaborative effort involving the Family Court, DCYF, law enforcement, the Attorney General’s Office, the Public Defender’s Office, and community based providers.

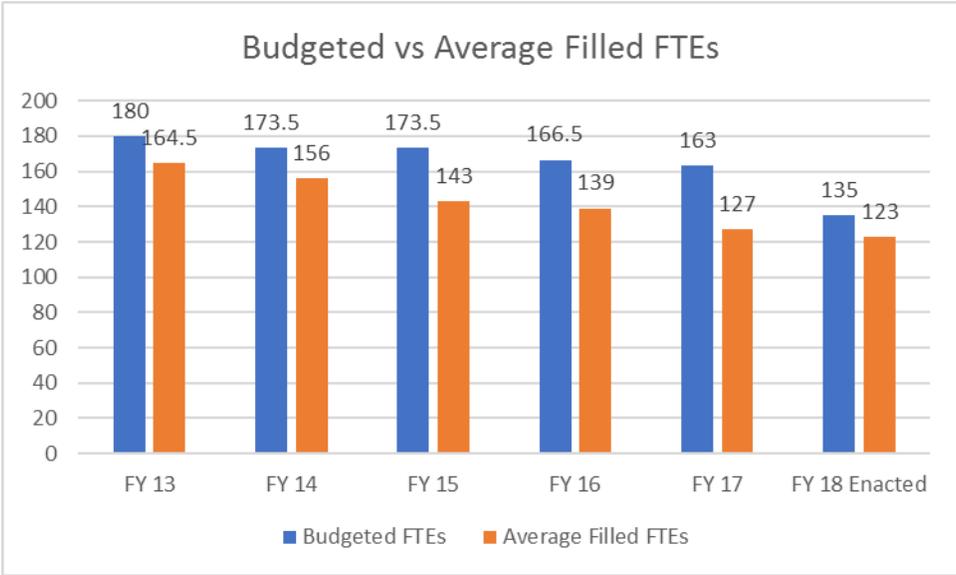
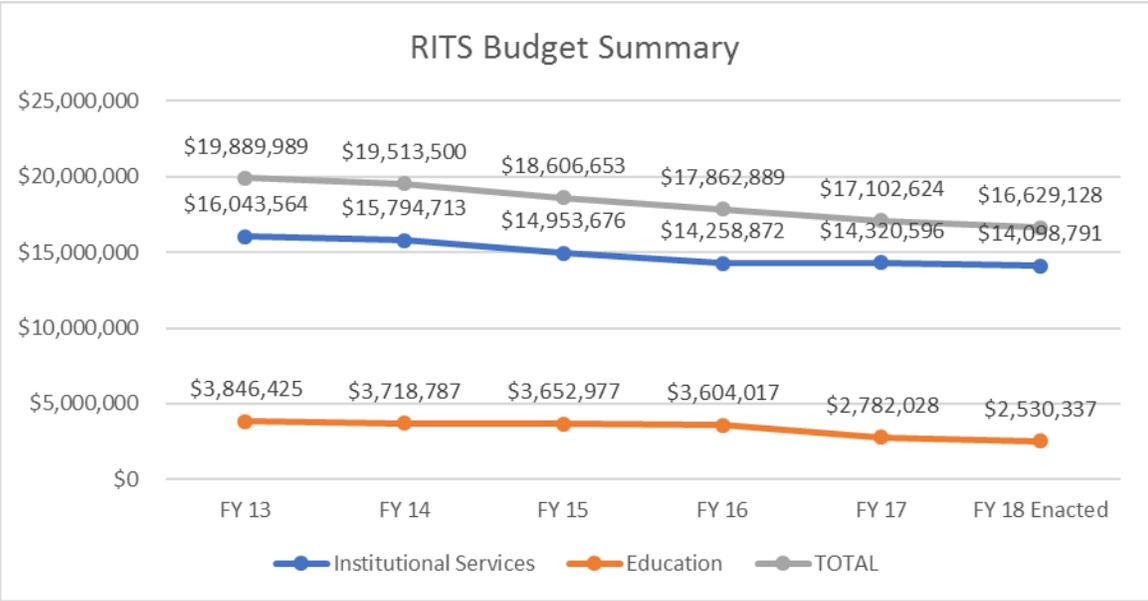
Average Census at the Training School over the past 9 years:



¹ As of September 29, 2017.

BUDGET AND STAFFING

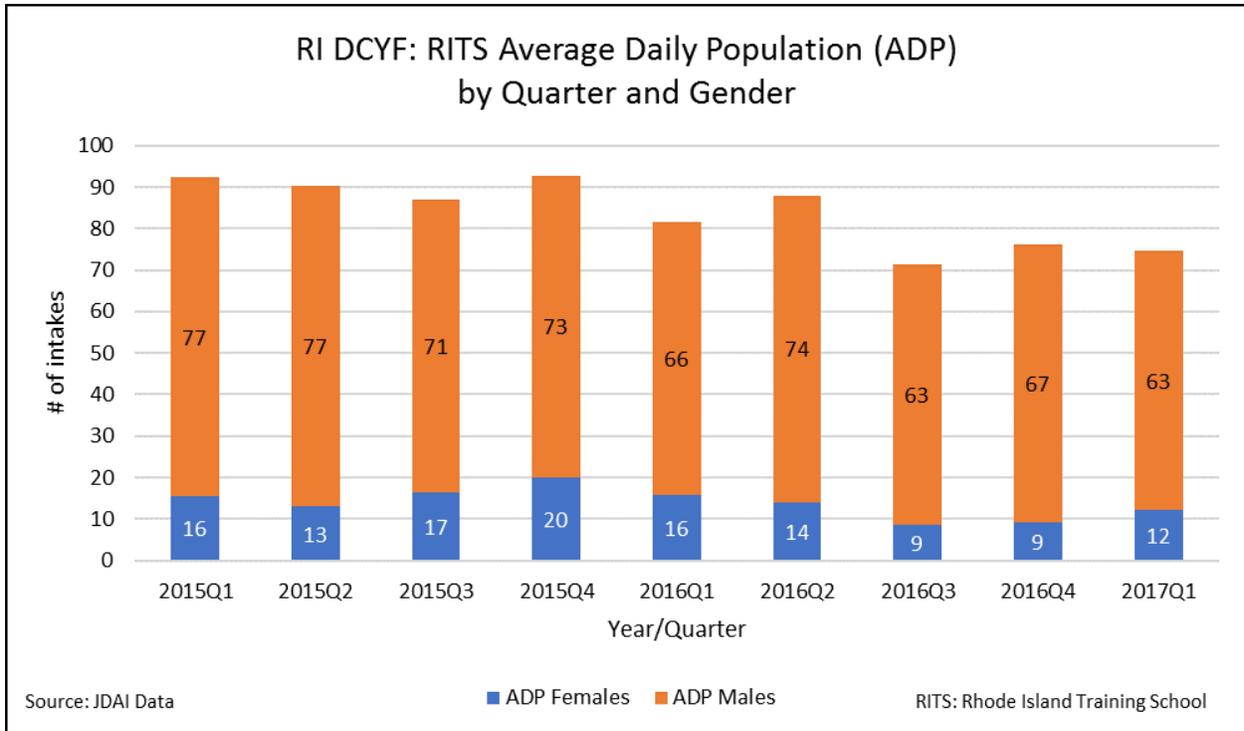
Over the past five fiscal years, the 55% reduction in the census has led to a 16% decrease in the budget and a 25% reduction in staffing levels. Despite a declining census, the need to be staffed appropriately to manage both facilities, and maintain separation of the multiple youth populations within our care, drives the overall high costs of the system.



SAFETY AND SECURITY

Youth Consolidation

To enhance the safety and security of our youth and staff, 19 male youth were moved from the Roosevelt Benton Youth Assessment Center (YAC) to the Youth Development Center (YDC) on July 31, 2017. We have found that operating one facility instead of two provides significant advantages related to safety and security. The consolidation allows for the separation of the non-adjudicated and adjudicated males, and the separation of the females, and we have been in consistent contact with the Family Court to provide updates and address concerns. As of September 29, 2017, our census is 62 residents², which is lower than the average trends over the past 9 quarters. This trend is based on a decrease in the placement of youth in the Training School by the Family Court and youth transitions back home and to the community.



Rhode Island State Police Assistance

The Rhode Island State Police (RISP) dispatched a Captain to the Training School to provide technical assistance in assessing ongoing safety and security needs. This 90-day assessment was requested at the end of July 2017 to support our work in stabilizing operations after the recent incidents between youth and staff.

² As of September 29, 2017. Capacity at the YDC is for 96 youth.

The Captain, with support from a Corporal, continues to obtain input from youth and staff regarding practices and procedures within the Training School and has been examining a broad scope of work to inform his recommendations including:

- Review of all safety policies and procedures
- Daily on-site observation of operations
- Use of the outside recreational areas
- Intake process at the YDC
- Shift changes and relief from post assignments
- Security cameras' functions and positions
- Facility conditions
- Potential vulnerabilities for contraband

Within the first 60 days of this assistance, immediate actions were taken to mitigate identified risks. The RISP Captain participates in Command Staff meetings that occur Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The meetings are attended by the facility administrators, program managers and union representatives. The agenda includes updates regarding daily events within the units, security system updates and programming.

Safety /Security Advisory Committee

The Captain established a Safety/Security Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee brings the workforce and management together in a cooperative effort to identify and mitigate any related facility/security issues throughout the Youth Assessment Center (YAC) and Youth Detention Center (YDC) and establishes and/or updates policies and protocols to improve facility and security operations. The Advisory Committee meets twice per week and has focused on the following topics:

- Promote and maintain custody and control of residents within the YDC (during consolidation);
- Promote and maintain a comprehensive physical plant maintenance program; and
- Ensure Department policies are being met and comply with Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiatives (JDAI) accreditation and the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

RI State Police will continue providing advice and assistance through the end of October. The Training School will also continue active and real-time communication with staff through Command Staff meetings, Safety/Security Advisory Committee meetings, and shift briefings.

Department of Corrections Assistance

At the end of July 2017, DCYF requested assistance from the Department of Corrections (DOC) to observe operations and staff youth interaction. DOC consulted with DCYF on the following areas:

- Training
- Post-incident debriefing process
- Programming

- Data collection and analysis of incidents and recidivism

We continue to request assistance from the DOC on ways to learn from their experience and training, which includes additional on-site evaluations at both Training School facilities. In the event of an emergency, the DOC has agreed to dispatch corrections officers to the YDC for enhanced assistance. The plan for communication and execution is in place but has not been needed during this review period.

This experience has strengthened the communication between DCYF and DOC, and it is recommended that the DOC provide consultation over the next year to assess our progress in maintaining changes to improve operations.

Security System

The security system that monitors the facilities within the Training School experienced a major failure in July 2017 after several previous small scale incidents. Back-up video recording was interrupted, and as a result there is no recording of the July incident in either the YDC or the YAC. In addition, the security system did not allow staff in the Master Control Center within the YDC to control security doors and intercoms in the YAC. Immediate actions were taken to resolve upgrades to the security system at the YDC and YAC, including replacing equipment and repairing the damaged fiber optic line caused the system failure.

The following actions occurred during the past 60 days:

- **Back-Up Video:** New recording equipment/system was installed and is operational.
- **Security Doors:** The security doors in the foyer and the entry hallway of the YAC were repaired and are fully operational.
- **Fiber Optic Line:** The YDC and the YAC were connected to the state fiber optic line allowing for live feeds beginning September 15, 2017. The fiber optic cable connection has enabled the security system within the YAC to operate, but the connection to the state fiber optic line does not enable a connection to control the YAC security system from the Command Center at the YDC. The State is exploring the feasibility of installing a separate fiber optic line between the YAC and the YDC. This will be addressed by the vendor who is selected to replace the security system.
- **Request for Proposals (RFP):** A RFP has been submitted to replace the security system called Program Logic Controller (PLC) within the Youth Development Center and the Youth Assessment Center. The bidders conference is on October 2, 2017 for interested vendors and the system replacement will be completed in June 2018.

All upgrades to the security system must be completed and future disruptions in the security system are to be reported to the Director of DCYF and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) by the Acting or permanent Executive Director of Juvenile Justice Services.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

A series of projects were completed during the review period to improve the YDC once youth were consolidated in that facility.

- **Soil Erosion on Grounds of YDC:** Due to soil erosion, the security fence at the YDC was examined. The soil erosion was addressed and the fence and landfill was secured during the week of August 21, 2017 followed by an assessment of the landfill by the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM). The recreational yard is back in use, and an updated protocol for use of the recreational field for organized recreational activity was finalized and distributed to staff and youth.
- **Tinted Windows:** The windows to separate the populations were tinted within the cafeteria, and plans were established to tint the windows to separate the populations gymnasium and other areas in the front of the Training School.
- **Sprinkler System:** Due to broken sprinkler heads causing flooding, sprinkler heads in YAC mod-A were replaced with tamper resistant ones, and this same work will be completed in YDC detention mod in October.

DCYF will replace all sprinkler heads at Training School facilities by January 2018. In addition, a Service Level Agreement will be developed and signed between DCYF and the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) to support the ongoing maintenance and management of the facilities. This agreement does not currently exist and DCAMM’s expertise and support is needed on a regular basis to address ongoing maintenance and infrastructure project needs.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Leadership

The interim Executive Director of Juvenile Justice Services has been working closely with managers and staff at the Training School during the past two months to manage and respond to new and previously existing issues. The position was posted on September 16, 2017 and closed on September 25, 2017 and was shared with several state and national partners and networks to generate a qualified pool of applicants. We are seeking a permanent leader for staff, youth and the community to fill this position by November 15, 2017.

Organizational Structure

The leadership team has developed a revised organizational chart for the Training School’s Command Staff. The revised organizational chart provides a clear reporting structure and promotes enhanced accountability throughout the organization. The new structure was communicated to staff and will be embedded into the updated policies and procedures that results from this review. Regular staff and youth forums will be held on an ongoing basis, to promote health and safety, professionalism, respect and guidance to youth to support their rehabilitation, and to foster collaboration.

Policy and Procedure Review

The safety review committee reviewed policies and procedures with a focus on strengthening rehabilitation practices and ensuring safety measures are met through consistent practice amongst the mods within the Training School. The safety review committee finalized revisions to the following protocols: 1) Use of the recreational field; 2) Intake protocol; and 3) Post relief of staff protocol. In addition, the safety review committee is reviewing the protocols related to visitation and searches of youth and is in the process of finalizing a protocol that addresses response priorities to critical incidents that occur within the units. The Rhode Island State Police (RISP) is currently reviewing remaining policies

and procedures as they relate to safety and security, and will include its assessment in the 90-day report. DCYF will incorporate this assessment into its ongoing planning efforts.

Youth Review

DCYF temporarily suspended its Director's Approval Process in August to promote direct referrals for placement of youth who are ready for release and reduce the time detained youth spend at the facility. Juvenile Program Workers were added to Administrative Review Meetings (ARM) to gain additional input. DCYF also updated its ARM process to ensure youth are transitioning within the timeframes permitted. Based on these process changes, youth are spending less time in the Training School while the census has remained steady at 60-63 youth.

DCYF will continue to strengthen the review process by examining the course of action for those not approved for release and providing weekly reports to the DCYF Director. Daily reports on the youth population will be sent to the DCYF Director to provide real time information on the population within the Training School, until the permanent Executive Director is hired.

PERSONNEL

The Training School has approximately 135 staff, who work in a variety of correctional, medical, clinical, educational, and culinary positions. The majority of staff are Juvenile Program Workers (JPWs). Out of 77 Juvenile Program Workers on staff, 49 are available and working.³ We are actively working with the Department of Administration to ensure all policies and procedures concerning various types of leave are followed. In addition, there are several personnel enhancements that were complete or put in process over the past 60 days.

Juvenile Program Workers (JPWs): The Department increased the number of Juvenile Program Workers (JPWs) from 38 to 49. Eleven (11) individuals successfully completed the training academy on August 4 and seven new JPWs from this class began working in August 2017. An additional five JPWs returned from sick/medical leave. We will be performing continuous recruitment moving forward to maintain sufficient staffing levels.

Clinical Social Workers: DCYF is hiring two Clinical Social Worker positions. During the review period, one new Clinical Social Worker was hired, and the additional position is posted.

Training Specialist: This position posted on August 26, and interviews concluded at the time of writing this report. This position will be filled in October 2017.

Late Night Program Manager: Late night duty coverage at the facility Sunday through Thursday began August 21, 2017. This position adds capacity to support the staff in planning, directing, coordinating and training so that they meet the programming needs of our youth.

Librarian: A part-time librarian position was posted during the review period and will allow the school library to reopen five days per week.

³ As of September 29, 2017.

Night and Weekend Work: DCYF adjusted shifts to allow for more coverage on nights and weekends with the new hires. In addition, the Department created opportunities to bid into second and third shift positions through a lateral transfer bidding process.

Next Steps

Staff recommended that DCYF revisit the use of the title “Superintendent” at the Training School and create a more defined professional pathway for Juvenile Program Workers (JPWs) to advance within the Training School. It was also recommended to create a position for a full-time, on-site facility manager. This would allow for a point person to continuously manage facilities and operations and provide immediate on-site support during any escalating incidents. The DCYF Director and the new Executive Director will discuss these proposals with union leadership over the coming months.

TRAINING AND STAFFING SUPPORTS

Training

To review strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for change, an informal survey was taken of the Juvenile Program Workers (JPWs) who attended one of the 18 JPW Pre-Service Academies at the Training School. Over the years, the experience for those attending has fluctuated, as has the duration of the academy, the requirements, the curriculum, the level of education, and required physical readiness. Due to these inconsistencies, the training subcommittee requested feedback from the JPWs prior to planning future trainings and the next JPW Academy. The addition of a Training Specialist in October will provide needed support to the staff to ensure continuous improvement and a point of contact for the staff.

Next Steps

Finalize an updated and comprehensive curriculum for new Juvenile Program Worker training academies, update a comprehensive onboarding process for all new staff, and create a structure for ongoing professional development for all staff at the facility, including a mechanism for tracking completion of training requirements. The training subcommittee made a series of recommendations, and the new Training Specialist will be tasked with providing a proposal to the DCYF Director with a full set of recommendations by the end of the year. Some recommendations to consider include:

- **Partner with the Department of Corrections:** Participate in shared trainings and have a peer-to-peer model. Training School staff already started leveraging opportunities during this review period and DCYF will monitor its progress.
- **Agility Test:** Reinstate agility test for future JPW Preservice Academies.
- **6 – 8 Week, Paid JPW Preservice Academy:** Allow potential hires to still work while attending the academy which mitigates potential upfront costs and lost wages of going to the academy. This would uphold a commitment to the job, greater insight to the job, accountability and acceptability of feedback once on the job, as well as encourages comradery and team building.
- **Training Group Development:** Form a group to assess the ongoing training needs of the facility and meet quarterly with a group including Trainer, JPW’s, clinical, administration and medical staff.

- **JPW Preservice Academy Curriculum:** Revise current Center for Children’s Law and Policy approved curriculum, and add new curriculum based on identified training deficits.
- **Ongoing Training for Continuing Education:** Develop and implement for Managers and Social Workers as it is required for professional development.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Ensure training is tracked and maintained regularly.
- **Workers Compensation Data:** Capture data on Workers Compensation to inform future training needs that will help to protect staff from risk and injury.

STAFF SUPPORTS

Uniforms: The casual attire of the Training School staff was noted as a concern by the State Police. DCYF accepted the Union’s recommendation for standard uniforms and is working with the Union to finalize specifications for the purchase of uniforms for our Juvenile Program Workers and Shift Coordinators.

Utility Belts and Radios: Staff were not wearing utility belts and were operating without sufficient radios. DCYF purchased utility belts and radios for front line staff to improve communication, incident response, and enhance staff tools. Utility belts and radios are expected to be available to staff by the beginning of November to put into operation. Once these enhancements are in operation, we will rely on staff and youth forums to gain feedback on the impact of these changes.

SERVICES

To review the provision of services offered to the youth residents at the Training School, we examined our screening, assessment and treatment planning instruments and services offered. To understand the impact of these services, and better understand the experience, we developed a focus group to engage with current youth residents to inform our findings and recommendations.

Treatment Planning: The Training School utilizes the following tools and processes to screen detained and adjudicated youth to assess acute mental health symptoms and their criminogenic needs.

- **Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument-2 (MAYSI-2):** This validated instrument is administered by custody and control staff upon intake of all youth into the facility and assesses mental health symptoms. It is used by staff to inform clinical interventions.
- **Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (SAVRY):** This validated instrument is administered by juvenile probation staff for all youth who are sentenced to the Training School. Thereafter, the SAVRY is administered by the Training School clinical staff every six months and at the time of the youth’s release from the facility to assesses criminogenic risk and protective factors. The SAVRY is used to assist in the development of the youth’s Individual treatment plan and in the development of a transition plan.

- **Individualized Treatment Plan (ITP) Meeting:** Convened by the Clinical Director within 30 days of the youth's sentence to the Training School, the meeting includes the youth, family members, clinical staff, medical staff, education staff, juvenile probation staff and the program manager to develop a treatment plan. The Individualized treatment plan is thereafter reviewed on a bi monthly basis by the facility treatment team.

The Training School clinical team provides a series of service interventions based on the assessments. Individual interventions include at least weekly individual counseling session with the youth and the clinical social worker (CSW) and therapist and as needed appointments with the psychiatrist for evaluation and medication management. In addition, the Training School offers an array of group treatments:

The Substance Abuse Core Treatment Program: Addresses co-occurring substance use, mental health and criminogenic needs.

Motivational Enhancement Therapy/Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - 12 (MET/CBT-12): An evidence-based short-term program for substance use that addresses co-occurring substance use, mental health and criminogenic needs.

VOICES: A Program of Self-Discovery and Empowerment for Girls addresses the unique needs of adolescent girls and is based on an evidence-based program called, Helping Women Recover & Beyond Trauma. This 18-session program includes modules on self, connecting with others and healthy living, with goals to decrease substance use, depressive and trauma symptoms and to increase self-efficacy.

My Life, My Choice: Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) Prevention Group designed teach youth how to recognize and avoid the recruitment tactics of exploiters of sex trafficking.

Sex Offender Treatment Program: Self-Management Group to reduce the likelihood of sexual offending recidivism, and is accompanied with weekly individual therapy and family therapy, as clinically indicated.

Aggression Replacement Training (ART) is a research- and evidence-based approach for working with youth who struggle with managing aggression. The structured curriculum integrates three key components: Social skills training, anger control and moral reasoning.

BE REAL about Health and BE REAL Reading: Group community outreach programs implemented by medical student volunteers from the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. The Health group empowers adjudicated youth to make healthy decisions through health education. The Reading group engages students in reading relevant works to help build student confidence in applying literature to their everyday decision-making skills while also invoking discussion about meaningful themes within literature.

Criminal Responsibility: Helps youth identify ways in which criminal activity has impacted their lives, how to accept responsibility for their behavior and how to avoid future criminal activity.

Mindfulness-based Skills Group curriculum: Since August, the Training school developed a Mindfulness-based Skills Group curriculum for the male detention unit and the female unit in September 2017 and focuses on issues relating to aggression and behavior. The purpose of this curriculum is to help individuals to become aware of their thoughts and feelings as they are happening, and to provide them with a set of skills that they can use to avoid engaging in risky or aggressive behaviors.

Community Meetings-Female Unit: The clinical intervention plan provides for weekly consultation with therapists for all the female youth as well as with the facility’s clinical team. The clinical team has begun daily (Monday through Friday) community meetings with the youth and the staff within the unit to provide stability and consistency for the staff and the youth with the female unit. We are working with the medical clinic to identify clinical and security protocol to address the acute behavioral issues in the female unit. We also began a new yoga program within the female unit to teach them another way to self-regulate their emotions.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The Training School provides youth with secondary and post-secondary classroom instruction and is approved by the Rhode Island Department of Education as an Alternative Educational Program. The Alternative Educational Program (AEP) provides students with the skills, knowledge and values to succeed in school, work and community by providing a safe, consistent and secure learning environment which meets the individual, educational and vocational needs of each resident while challenging all residents to fulfill their potential. Each student has an AEP to provide an alternative, age appropriate, rigorous and relevant educational program that provides continued work toward earning a high school diploma or its equivalent.

The AEP utilizes an on-line curriculum offering a virtual classroom that can be adapted to meet the various needs of our students. It also allows teachers to personalize the curriculum assignments to meet the student’s academic skill level and their school districts’ high school graduation requirements. In addition, a full range of post-secondary classes from college level to vocational are offered, in addition to test preparation such as the GED, Accuplacer and the SAT/PSAT. All classrooms are fitted with computers that allow students to access the online curriculum and academic interventions. The Training School supports research based math and reading intervention programs and provides students with access to both graphic and fine arts electives.

Instruction: The identified method of instruction is blended learning. Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through delivery of content and instruction via digital and online media with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace. All classes are staffed by certified teachers working within their content area. The STAR assessment is administered to students once they are enrolled in the AEP and every 30 days, to determine progress of the student’s reading and math level which are integrated within their individualized learning plans.

Special Educational Services: Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) will be serviced within the Inclusion Model. This model provides academic and behavioral supports to students with IEPs in the general educational setting.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP): LEP services are provided on an as needed basis by a certified English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor who is also the school’s social studies instructor.

Pre-Apprenticeship Program: The AEP School is collaborating with the Institute of Labor Studies & Research on a pilot pre-apprenticeship program in the skilled trades. Students who have already obtained either their GED or high school diploma will be eligible to participate in the program.

Governor’s Workforce Board: The AEP is collaborating with the Governor’s Workforce Board (GWB) on a work-readiness program for post-secondary students. Through the Comprehensive Community Action Program (CCAP), which operates the Cranston, Pawtucket, Providence and Warwick Youth Centers, twenty (20) hours of work-readiness instruction will be provided to post-secondary students while residing at the Training School. In addition, students will complete the Youth Center enrollment process and have access to a case manager and job trainer. This will streamline the student’s entry into RI’s youth workforce system through any one of the fourteen (14) Youth Centers upon release.

Safe Crisis Management Professional Development: DCYF uses a recognized train-the-trainer, safe crisis management training model recommended by the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI). This safe crisis management training assisted teachers and JPW’s on understanding youth who have different experiences, cognitive capacities, and varying degrees of success, and how these variables affect their behavior and learning capabilities. This training promotes positive growth, and creates and uses a function-based behavior support plan, and interventions that are the least restrictive.

The Highlander Institute: Teachers, administrators, and support staff are provided with intensive in-class professional development to support specific classrooms with technology integration and blended learning methods based on national research and best practices.

Next Steps

To expand our service array, explore alternative services and utilize data to inform the effectiveness of these services in generating positive outcomes for our youth we must:

- Continue systematic reviews of youth to ensure no youth spends additional time in the Training School when it is not warranted.
- Invest in critical unmet services that were identified including:
 - Gang intervention
 - Family and young adult transition preparedness
 - Temporary community placement alternatives, particularly for our female youth
- Expand options for educational, job/vocational training, and recreational programs for youth residing at the Training School.
- Continue to explore other evidence based programming options for detained and sentenced youth at the Training School.
- Evaluate screening, assessment and planning tools and the resulting scores, service interventions and outcomes to better understand the effectiveness of the Training School.
- Expand active contract management practices at DCYF to group homes to understand entry/reentry patterns and strong/weak services.
- Utilize data to target interventions and lead to evidence based programs and design plans to test efficacy of programs that we are operating for our youth.
- Cross train with other programs and within DCYF to specifically include trauma informed training for all staff at the Training School.
- Develop relationships with organizations that will meet our professional development needs.

Appendix

RHODE ISLAND TRAINING SCHOOL

Roosevelt Benton Youth Assessment Center (YAC)

Capacity: 52 youth

Previously used for Detained Males



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Capacity: 96 Youth

Current Consolidated Facility

F Mod: Detained Males; B and C Mod: Adjudicated Males; D: Females

