



NYC Department of Juvenile Justice

Annual Report

2007



SENIOR STAFF MESSAGE

Dear Fellow New Yorkers:

It is a pleasure to present the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice 2007 Annual Report on its vital work with detained young people.

Twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week, dedicated staff in three secure detention facilities and a citywide network of 18 non-secure detention group homes care for 6,000 youth who enter our custody each year. Some youth are detained a day or two, while court cases for others take longer to adjudicate. Regardless of the length of stay, it is the Department's mission to help a young person make the best of the time he or she spends in detention and to prepare them to return to their home communities.

DJJ was created in 1979 to provide the highest quality of care and custody to New York City's young people involved in the juvenile justice system. During the past several years, the Department has strategically responded to trends in its detention population by enhancing its provision of medical, mental health and psychiatric services, increasing direct childcare staffing, developing gender-specific services to address the varied service needs of both girls and boys, and undertaking a number of innovative steps, including Discharge Planning Services, to promote positive outcomes for youth in and beyond their stay in detention.

In his 2007 State of the City Address, New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg promised the most comprehensive reform in decades to the City's juvenile justice system. Delivering on its part of this promise, DJJ launched several new initiatives designed to enhance custody and care provided to youth, particularly those with mental health and psychiatric issues, while reducing detention usage and avoiding needless out-of-home placement in a state facility.

Among the first of the reform programs is the Collaborative Family Initiative, which has enabled the Department to reduce the length of stay for youth with mental health needs in DJJ facilities, while also ensuring that young people released to their families receive necessary treatment and family supports without interruption or delay. By engaging and strengthening the family unit, the initiative also facilitates re-entry from Department facilities back into the community.

Moving to the front door of detention, the Release to Parent Initiative provides immediate assessment of youth admitted to DJJ by the police using a series of criteria to determine if a youth is qualified to avoid detention and return home before appearing in court. In this way, DJJ diverts youth that don't pose a risk to the community from further involvement with the juvenile justice system. Another initiative designed to enhance the quality of care for youth is the Childcare Enhancement Initiative, which has reduced the work day of staff at our three directly-operated, non-secure detention group homes to enhance the overall quality of childcare provided by the Department.

During the upcoming year with our partners in government, community-based organizations and stakeholders, we look forward to focusing on these and several other initiatives designed to invest in the future of our city and its most valuable resource—young people.

Sincerely,

Senior staff members of the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice

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Introduction

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) serves the needs of youth and families of New York City through the provision of detention, aftercare, and prevention services to juveniles ages 7 through 15, including three secure detention facilities and 18 non-secure detention group homes that admit nearly 6,000 youth each year.

The agency is committed to creating positive interventions in the lives of troubled youth. In this role, DJJ and its staff members are entrusted by families, community partners, service providers, other City agencies, and the public to administer programs for youth that provide relevant and meaningful solutions and better outcomes for young people involved in the juvenile justice system. DJJ also works with youth and their families to sustain positive growth and socially responsive, self-enhancing behavior, which ultimately guides them toward healthy, successful lives. The Department makes every effort to ensure that a young person's first contact with the juvenile justice system is also her or his last.

This report highlights the accomplishments of DJJ in 2007, starting with the initiatives that have touched and transformed the lives of youth and their families.



Mayor Bloomberg celebrates with staff at the DJJ Employee Recognition Ceremony

Mission

DJJ's mission is to provide Non-Secure and Secure Detention for alleged Juvenile Delinquents and Secure Detention for alleged Juvenile Offenders whose cases are pending, along with post-adjudicated juveniles awaiting transfer to state facilities. DJJ retains youth in structured and secure settings. While in detention, residents receive an array of services, such as education, health, mental health and psychiatric services, case management, discharge planning, voluntary religious services, and recreation.



DJJ

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Agency Reform

In Mayor Bloomberg's State of the City Address in 2007, he emphasized one of the City's top priorities, which is protecting public safety. Even as overall crime figures have fallen, the City is committed to managing and sustaining a juvenile justice system that appropriately serves public safety, while also providing support for system-involved youth to remain with their families and communities.

During his address, the Mayor pledged the most significant restructuring of the juvenile justice system in decades. Department of Juvenile Justice staff are part of the reform effort that will aim to achieve many aggressive goals, including:

- Preventing and reducing the use of detention
- Reducing the average length of stay in detention
- Assisting young people leaving detention with re-entry into their home communities
- Engaging families in addressing mental health issues by ensuring uninterrupted care upon release from detention

Agency Reform Highlight:

The overall reform effort has already yielded positive results in its first year. The total number of admissions to DJJ decreased 6.5% in 2007. In addition, the Department's average daily population declined 8% as compared to calendar year 2006. Average length of stay for youth in detention decreased by 2 days.

Department Initiatives

In 2007, two initiatives were developed as part of the City's reform, including the **Collaborative Family Initiative (CFI)** and the **Release to Parent (RTP) Initiative**. A third action, **Childcare Enhancement**, was implemented to further improve the quality of care provided to youth.

Collaborative Family Initiative

The first flagship of the Department's reform was launched in February 2007 with the Collaborative Family Initiative, a program that provides juveniles who are in need of psychiatric and mental health support with continuing, uninterrupted services for 90 days upon release.

In NYC, youth with mental health issues comprise of more than two-thirds of all juveniles in detention. Those affected by mental health issues tend to stay in detention twice as long as unaffected youth, and are more likely to be incarcerated again. The CFI program aims to enroll youth and their families while still in detention, ensuring that upon their release from custody, they receive the immediate psychiatric and/or mental health services they need. These services are provided free of charge to young people and their families by local, community-based service providers. Families are offered supportive counseling, direct mental health services as needed, and additional referrals.

"CFI has successfully brought the wait for mental health services in the community for youth with mental health needs leaving detention to zero," stated First Deputy Commissioner Judith Pincus during a legislative oversight hearing in February. Prior to CFI, it was not uncommon for youth released to the community to wait as long as six months for psychiatric services. CFI has effectively eliminated this wait time.

In 2007, the CFI program returned 59 youth to their communities with the essential, uninterrupted mental health care they need.

Release to Parent Initiative

In October 2007, DJJ unveiled another program designed to reduce the number of youth in detention in its ongoing effort to reform the city's juvenile justice system. Release to Parent is an assessment program for youth admitted to DJJ facilities by the police. An immediate evaluation allows Juvenile Counselors to determine whether a youth is qualified to avoid detention and return home before appearing in court. Young people who are deemed eligible to be released to a parent or guardian are issued a Family Court Appearance Ticket, requiring a youth and parent/guardian to appear before a family court judge. This process avoids detention, and returns young people to their families and communities.

"Research shows that the longer youth stay in detention, the more likely they are to continue in delinquency or be placed in a state facility," Deputy Commissioner for Legal Affairs Herman L. Dawson stated. "The Release to Parent Initiative is poised to have a significant impact on admissions to detention, helping to ensure that youth detained are truly those for whom detention is the only appropriate option."

From the start of this initiative through December 2007, 33 youth have been released to their parents/guardians and have avoided detention in a DJJ facility.

Childcare Enhancement Initiative

In March 2007, the staff assigned to the Department's three directly-operated group homes had their work day reduced from 12 hours to 8. This achievement was made possible by the Childcare Enhancement Initiative, which afforded additional resources to the Department to enhance the quality of childcare provided by staff members and therefore the care environment for children and staff alike. Funding support for the initiative was provided by the Mayor's Office of Management and Budget.

The initial staff expansion reflected a group of 14 Congregate Care Specialists who graduated in March, including re-deployed staff from the child welfare system. The addition of new staff to DJJ's three group homes reduces the current work load of existing staff members, and helps to alleviate the pressures of 12-hour work days. The advent of a 40-hour work week is a rewarding experience for veteran staff members and newcomers, too.

Youth Programming



Twenty-four new programs were implemented in 2007 for youth in detention, totaling approximately \$1.1 million allocated by the New York City Council Juvenile Justice Committee for contracted program services with community-based organizations. The youth development programs are intended to assist young people in building pro-social skills during their stay in detention. Youth are invited to continue their involvement in these programs after their release from detention.

Youth in secure facilities and group homes benefit from this program investment, which is being carried out by a host of well-known, community-based NYC organizations and institutions. The program list includes: Literacy; Dance; Arts & Crafts; Violence Prevention and Conflict Resolution; Leadership thru Sport; Double Dutch; Swimming; Yoga; and Educational Programs on hygiene and sexuality.

Among the program sponsors are Columbia University Tutoring, Bronx Academy of Art & Dance, Community Counseling and Mediation, Tri-state Counseling, Hospital Audiences, Inc., The Urban Dove, National Double Dutch League, CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Yoga for Youth, United Community Center, Inc., Voices Unbroken, and Eihab Children's Services.

Other Youth Activities

The Department aims to provide educational and recreational programs for its youth so that their experiences with the juvenile justice system are inspiring and meaningful, and provide them with opportunities for future growth. This also includes the integration of positive role models in group settings, giving youth exposure to individuals they can learn from, admire, or aspire to be like.

In 2007, youth in secure facilities and group homes participated in dozens of group activities, including a few of these highlights:



Master magician David Blaine shows youth a few card tricks during visit to Bridges Juvenile Center

- Swim Program with Olympic Swimmer Dr. Jane Katz
- Three Kings Day celebration at Hostos Community College
- Visit from master magician and stunt performer David Blaine
- Pet Therapy sponsored by The Good Dog Foundation
- Soccer Clinic sponsored by the NY Red Bulls and Telemundo 47
- An agency-wide "Build Your Own School" Competition
- Visits to the New York Public Library
- Inter-facility Basketball Tournament sponsored by The Urban Dove



Olympiad swimmer and John Jay College Professor Dr. Jane Katz instructs a group of girls during the Aqua Water Swimming Clinic

Community & Stakeholder Engagement

Inside/Outside: Building Blocks to Economic Independence

The Department of Juvenile Justice and the Mayor's Center for Economic Opportunity co-sponsored an innovative forum in July 2007 to explore the needs of youth returning to the community from detention. The forum, titled "Inside/Outside: Building Blocks to Economic Independence," featured a panel of experts on various juvenile issues, and drew over 100 attendees from state and local governments, youth advocacy and interest groups, academia, and more. The event was held at the Founders Auditorium at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, and consisted of panel experts from the Correctional Association of New York, the Mayor's Office of Adult Education, the Department of Youth and Community Development, the Inwood House, and DJJ staff.



Over 100 attendees and panel experts listen intently at the Inside/Outside: Building Blocks to Economic Independence forum held last July

The panel presented on several issues pertaining to youth, including education, workforce, girls, and parental engagement. Attendees were encouraged to participate in break-out sessions following the presentations, to identify key strategies for effectively reconnecting youth exiting detention to the educational and workforce mainstream. The Inside/Outside forum brought together community groups, and state and city agencies to discuss the important question of how best to develop meaningful programming to assist youth in overcoming poverty as they leave detention and return to their families and home communities.

City Roundtable with Community and Religious Leaders

In November, DJJ hosted a roundtable of religious and community leaders moderated by Reverend Alfonso Wyatt. Nearly 20 organizations were represented at the event, including Big Brothers, Big Sisters of NYC, The New York Urban League, The Mission Society, and Medgar Evers College. DJJ provided roundtable participants with an overview of the juvenile justice system, as well as presentations on the Release to Parent and Collaborative Family Initiatives.

This opportunity enabled community members and service providers to exchange ideas on how to improve the services for our city's youth. By leveraging such ideas from organizations and individuals active in communities throughout NYC and the boroughs, DJJ can enhance options that return youth to their families, provide needed services without interruption, and lessen the likelihood of youth returning to detention in the future. The Department continues to pursue constructive dialogue and partnerships with community organizations to maximize department resources and ultimately the lives of our youth.

News Highlights

Domestic and International Visitors: Throughout 2007, a number of officials, delegates, and guests from all over the world came to visit DJJ to get an inside look at our juvenile justice model and to share ideas with like agencies here and abroad. Representatives from various jurisdictions—including Kazakhstan, Ireland, South Africa, Sweden, Britain and Pennsylvania—were warmly welcomed by DJJ staff. The Department works to cultivate domestic and international relationships with sister agencies in other jurisdictions, which encourages sharing best practices and promotes collaboration.



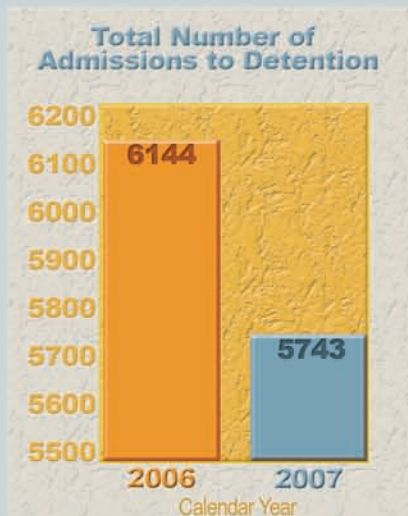
DOE Celebrates Achievements for Passages Academy Students: In June, 65 students who were enrolled in the Department of Education's Passages Academy were recognized for their academic accomplishments during a series of formal promotional ceremonies. With students dressed in caps and gowns, a United States Army Color Guard, the National Anthem and keynote speakers, the events demonstrated numerous success stories of youth who have come in contact with Passages Academy inside and outside DJJ facilities. Families and guests were moved by the overwhelming support and students' accomplishments. Achievement awards were presented to students who succeeded in key areas, allowing them to advance from the 8th grade to high school.

DJJ Recognizes Employee Contributions: At an employee recognition ceremony in December 2007, Mayor Bloomberg gave accolades to the many men and women who devote their careers to the youth and families served by DJJ. The Mayor presented the first award of the evening for outstanding coordination of discharge planning for released youth to DJJ's Discharge Planning Office and its director, Marilyn Farmer. Mayor Bloomberg touted the achievements of the office and attributed the success of the Agency's Collaborative Family Initiative (CFI) to Discharge Planning, describing them as "the team that is truly the heart and soul" of CFI. The Mayor further praised the work of DJJ and cited several of the Agency's juvenile justice reform efforts, including the Release to Parent Initiative that reduces unnecessary detention usage.

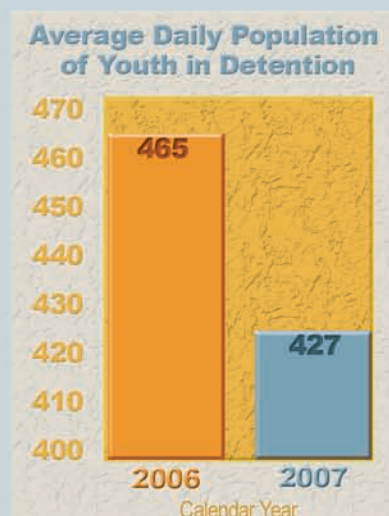


Agency Statistics

From 2006 to 2007, DJJ has seen a downward trend in the following agency statistics: total number of youth admissions, average daily population, and the average length of stay. These decreases represent the achievements of young people, their families, and the staff of DJJ. With everyone working in unison to return youth to their families and communities to lead successful lives, it is expected that these numbers will continue to decrease. The Department attributes these successes to its participation in the City's reform efforts.



Department admissions dropped 6.5% from 2006 to 2007*



Average daily population decreased 8% from 2006 to 2007*



Average length of stay decreased 2 days from 2006 to 2007*

* The Department generally reports these and other statistics on a Fiscal Year basis.



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