

2022

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice



REVIEW OF STAFFING LEVELS

In response to Chapter 2 of the 2022 Virginia Acts of Assembly
2022 Appropriation Act, Item 428 (B)

PREFACE

This report of DJJ's staffing levels addresses the language required in Chapter 2 of the 2022 Appropriation Act, Item 428 (B):

“The Department of Juvenile Justice shall conduct a review of staffing levels, including vacancies, rates of staff turnover and recruitment statistics, employment conditions, employee health and safety, and employee compensation at the Department. The review shall include an analysis of the impact reductions in census levels have on the Department's staffing requirements. The Department shall deliver a report containing such data and information to the Governor and the Chairs of the House Appropriations Committee and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee by October 1, 2022.”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DJJ has undergone a multi-year transformation that has overhauled the way the agency approaches juvenile justice. Although the transformation was necessary, it has taxed existing employees within the agency. That, compounded with the impacts of the pandemic and the major shift in employment market options, have resulted in significant recruitment and retention issues for DJJ.

The agency has developed a host of initiatives to address these issues and continues to work towards improved staffing levels. Unfortunately, at the end of FY 2022 DJJ reported a 26% vacancy rate. This rate exists despite a 54% reduction in the number of funded direct care positions to account for reduced population and capacity.

DJJ is committed to maintaining safe and healthy workplaces; continuing to recruit, retain, and develop a team of highly skilled and motivated staff; and aligning procedures, policies, and resources to support the team in meeting the agency goals. However, the agency will need General Assembly and Administration support to secure the necessary resources to overcome critical staffing shortages and ensure long term retention of qualified employees.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) enhances public safety by providing effective accountability measures and interventions that improve the lives of court-involved and committed youth. In FY 2022, DJJ operated 30 court services units (CSUs), Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center (JCC), and the Virginia Public Safety Training Center (VPSTC). As of June 30, 2022, DJJ audits and certifies the CSUs, including two locally operated units; 24 juvenile detention centers; one JCC; eight community placement programs (CPPs); nine detention reentry programs; and 14 group homes, shelter care facilities, and independent living programs.

DJJ's mission is to protect the public by preparing court involved youth to be successful citizens. To accomplish this mission, DJJ uses an integrated approach to juvenile justice, bringing together current research and best practices to target delinquent behavior; meet the needs of court-involved youth, victims, and communities; and manage activities and resources in a responsible and proactive manner. DJJ's primary responsibilities are to hold youth accountable for wrongdoing, prevent further offending, and treat all youth fairly and equitably.

DJJ strives to balance the safety of the community with the needs of youth. When appropriate, youth may be diverted from the court system as a means to best address minor infractions and low-risk behaviors. For matters that require court involvement, DJJ uses a balanced approach that provides (i) protection of public safety by control of youth's liberties through community supervision or secure confinement, (ii) a structured system of incentives and graduated sanctions in both community and direct care settings to ensure accountability for youth's actions, and (iii) a

variety of services and programs that build skills and competencies (e.g., substance abuse and aggression management treatment, academic and career readiness education). These strategies enable youth to become law-abiding members of the community during and upon release from DJJ's supervision.

Court Service Units

Court service units (CSUs), within the Division of Community Programs, provide a continuum of community-based services and interventions for youth. CSUs are responsible for the intake process, where youth have their first contact with DJJ; diversion plans, where a case is handled informally; assessments and court recommendations; along with both probation and parole case planning and supervision. The 30 state-operated CSUs comprise DJJ's primary community presence across the state of Virginia.¹ Staff include CSU Directors, Probation Officer Supervisors, Probation Officers, and administrative support.

Direct Care

The Division of Residential Services provides specialized services to youth committed to DJJ and admitted to direct care. Currently, DJJ operates only one JCC at Bon Air, though youth may also serve their commitment in other placement options, such as a CPP, detention reentry program, or contracted treatment program. The Central Admission and Placement (CAP) Unit analyzes the offense and commitment information as well as the psychological, behavioral, educational, and sociological needs of incoming residents in order to determine the recommended length of stay (LOS) and most appropriate placement. Once placed, youth receive education, health, mental health, reentry, and other services as appropriate for their individualized needs. A variety of positions are necessary to maintain direct care operations, including, but not limited to, medical and mental health professionals, security staff, recreational therapists, food service workers, building and grounds, business office and administrative support staff.

Education

The Division of Education operates the Yvonne B. Miller High School and post-secondary programs, providing education for middle school, high school, and post-secondary students. Education administrators, teachers, and staff are licensed by the Virginia Department of Education, with additional support staff licensed by the Virginia Board of Medicine. In addition to educational services at Bon Air JCC, the Division of Education supports the CPPs by providing resources and opportunities to the post-secondary students for the purpose of continuing education after receiving a high school diploma or GED[®] certificate. The Division of Education is staffed by teachers, administrators, and support staff.

Administration and Finance

The Administration and Finance Division provides support functions to all divisions within the agency. Information technology is a critical function that provides the foundation for all

¹ Two additional CSUs (Arlington and Fairfax) are locally operated.

activities. Human resources, procurement, accounting, business office, and budget services are available to support management and ensure sound financial transactions. Capital outlay and the Virginia Public Safety Training Center team work to keep facilities in top shape for operations. The Administration and Finance Division is comprised of professionals and support staff across the broad range of services provided.

Policy

The Policy Division keeps DJJ compliant with laws and regulations. Legislative and regulatory teams provide guidance with regard to Board regulations, and state and federal legislation. The Certification team ensures that all DJJ and non-DJJ facilities are monitored for compliance.

Director's Office

The Director's Office provides guidance and direction to the agency. In addition, the Bureau of Investigations, Quality Assurance, Internal Audit, and Information Security all fall under the auspice of the Director's Office. These units provide neutral oversight of agency operations.

STAFFING LEVELS

As of June 2022, DJJ had 1665 funded positions. Of those positions, 647 support direct care and 794 support Court Service units, with the remainder supporting the remaining agency functions. The agency is experiencing critical vacancy rates, with 429, or 26%, of positions vacant at the end of FY 2022.

RETENTION AND COMPENSATION

DJJ has worked to improve its employee retention efforts by ensuring that agency compensation practices are fair and competitive. In FY 2019, HR embarked on a comprehensive overhaul of its compensation and classification practices. In the Division of Community Programs, three salary alignment studies were conducted with approximately 800 positions (including Probation Officers I and II, Probation Officer Managers I and II, and Administrative and Office Specialists II and III), and several employees were deemed to be misaligned and received salary adjustments. Two studies were also conducted (over 300 positions) in the Division of Residential Programs and Division of Administration and Finance. Finally, compensation reviews also included a division-wide review of over 100 roles in the Division of Education, and included a comprehensive review of organizational structure, pay practices, classification, and salary alignment. This review resulted in the reclassification of roles, salary adjustments, and

development of a master plan for pay in the Division of Education. These alignments were a critical move in efforts to retain staff and invest in more training and skill development.

In FY 2022 HR worked in consultation with DHRM to complete an agency-wide comprehensive salary review and alignment. In addition, under new leadership, DJJ addressed salary compression concerns among probation officers. Alongside these adjustments, leaders in both HR and Residential Services worked together to create a formal retention plan for direct care positions with high turnover.

In addition to salary alignments, the Division of Community Programs reviewed CSU staffing patterns to ensure that adequate supervisors were deployed across CSUs to provide the proper guidance. To further reinforce and invest in staff, the division continues to work on a career progression plan.

Retention continues to be a struggle, especially in our critical areas (Probation and Residential Security). DJJ's turnover rate in FY 2022 exceeded 17% and within the first 5 years of employment exceeds 41%. We continue to look at engagement and compensation as ways to improve retention. These factors must be considered as we also recruit for these key vacancies so we can ensure that we don't have an endless slog of recruitment activity, while being unable to retain staff (contributing to low morale).

Figure 1: FY 2022 Retention and Engagement Statistics

<u>Average Years of Service</u>	<u>Internal Promotions</u>	<u>Internal Transfers</u>	<u>External Transfers</u>	<u>Voluntary Separations</u>
14.0	24	90	33	181

Enhanced salary and benefits for our Residential and Probationary staff would enable us to more easily recruit and retain top talent for these mission-critical roles and ensure safety in our communities. These changes would require action from the General Assembly and possible Legislative changes.

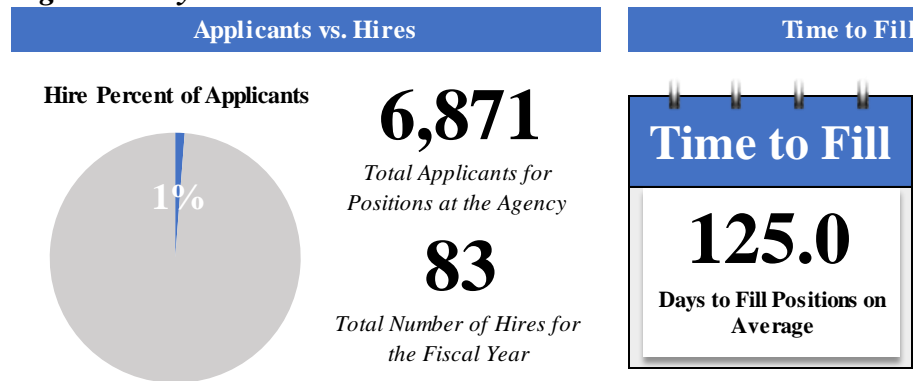
RECRUITMENT

DJJ is in a constant state of recruiting talent due to the high turnover rates. Some positions garner significant applications however the rate of qualified applicants is low. Many applicants fail to meet physical fitness and background requirements. This results in significant time devoted to screening applications with low levels of successful recruitment.

In addition, the HR Department has experienced significant staff vacancies, resulting in challenges for agency-wide recruitment. HR staff have filled in where there have been gaps on the Talent Acquisition team. Efforts are underway to fully staff the team so that HR can improve agency recruitment efforts, particularly the mission-critical vacancies in our Residential (security) Division. Due to these challenges, there is room for improvement in our Time to Fill and Vacancy metrics.

Meanwhile, the HR team continues to streamline recruiting efforts for DJJ, with goals to reduce the “time to fill” for key vacancies. There have been significant changes to the way DJJ recruits, particularly for the Resident Specialist I position. Many recruitment events are in the residential facility rather than at the training center to allow greater facility involvement in hiring decisions. HR is working to align recruiting practices with overall agency strategy.

Figure 2: Key Recruitment Statistics



EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

TRANSFORMATION

Nearly eight years ago, DJJ initiated a significant transformation plan. With the input of many stakeholders, DJJ undertook a rigorous self-analysis to ensure positive outcomes for the youth, families, and communities while using taxpayer resources effectively. While the transformation is necessary, it has been taxing on staff that have remained throughout the duration. Within the last ten years, DJJ closed 4 correctional centers and two halfway houses. Many residential staff faced the stress of whether they would be part of layoffs or relocated to other facilities. As each closure occurred many were relocated to remaining facilities, often transitioning through multiple closures and relocations.

Staff within the CSUs had to adapt to new methods and undergo educational programs to learn best practices. A shift in how they conducted business occurred in order to conduct a more individualized approach to juvenile justice. Again, these types of transformation, while necessary, can wear thin an already weary and overtaxed staff.

Under new leadership, DJJ will build upon the strength and successes it has achieved while developing new initiatives to address where DJJ has fallen short of its goals. Full commitment from the staff is key and renewed energy is needed.

TRAINING

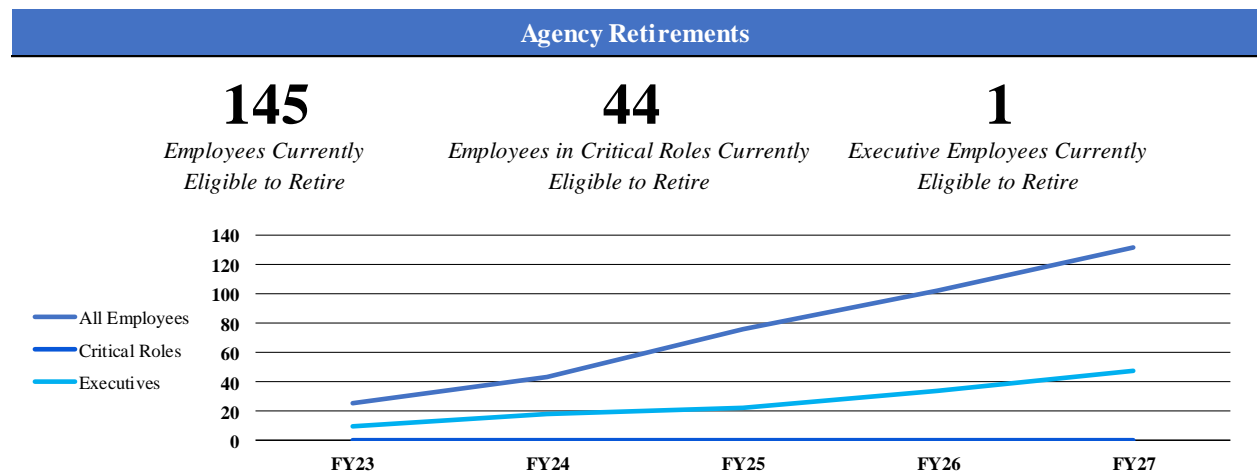
DJJ Training & Organizational Development continued to expand its services in 2022 while maintaining the regulatory and foundational training programs that support DJJ’s core mission. This unit supports the transformation through staff development, both in educational and skill-based learning opportunities. HR Essential Skills for Supervisors, which focuses on practical information exchange and situational/scenario-based active engagement. Professional development of supervisors occurs through the Frontline Leadership and Emerging Leaders programs. Training & Organizational Development staff are certified and provide mediation and conflict coaching for agency units. Organizational Development is also responsible for the agency’s leadership development program.

In addition, DJJ Residential Training staff operate Basic Skills academies for both direct care and non-security/support staff. They also provide required “refresher” in-service training serving the needs of residential employees.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

DJJ has many strong leaders in each Division who are prepared to fill in or take over in the event of retirements or resignations. The agency also has a Leadership Development Program to prepare future leaders in our organization and have established a Strategic Workforce Planning/Recruitment Workgroup. Ultimately, lower turnover and vacancy rates are key to allow for proper succession and reduce employee loss due to burnout.

Figure 3: FY 2022 Agency Retirement Statistics



EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Overall, DJJ significantly reduced the number of workers' compensation claims since FY 2016. The total number of claims filed decreased from 273 in FY 2016 to 58 in FY 2022, a decrease of 79%. Claims from Bon Air² have decreased from 238 in FY 2016 to 50 in FY 2022, a decrease of 79%.

Similarly, the costs associated with workers' compensation claims decreased 78%, from \$1,189,912 in FY 2016 to \$262,049 in FY 2022, with a majority of costs for FY 2022 being associated with Bon Air JCC (\$241,586).³ DJJ continues to improve employment training and retention practices in the hopes of creating a safer environment and further reducing workers' compensation claims and costs.

IMPACT OF POPULATION LEVELS

Due in part to the *reduce* initiative of DJJ's initial transformation plan, modifying Virginia's Length of Stay (LOS) Guidelines for Indeterminately Committed Juveniles (LOS Guidelines), the average daily population (ADP) of youth in direct care decreased from 599 in FY 2014 to 195 in FY 2022. The use of non-JCC alternative placements further *reduced* the number of those youth in a JCC: the ADP in non-JCC alternative placements increased from 8 in FY 2014 to 89 in FY 2022, and the JCC ADP decreased from 591 to 106.

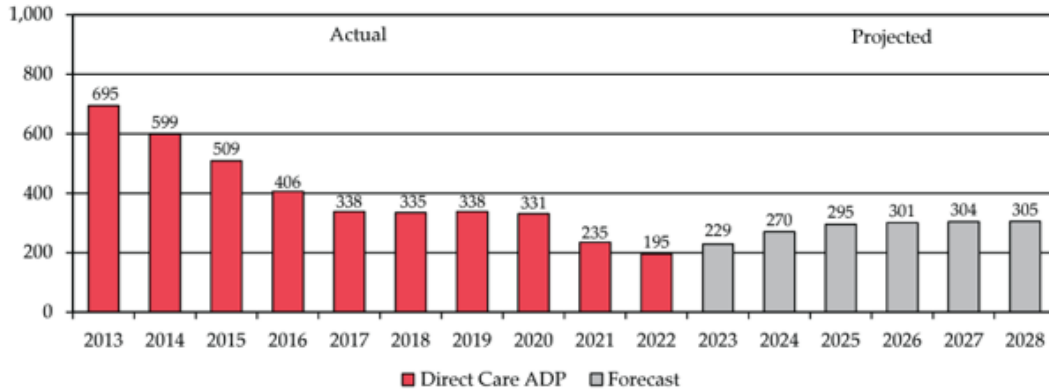
In line with this population shift, the expenditures and positions funded for JCCs decreased while the expenditures for continuum of care increased due to continuous efforts to reinvest funds toward alternative placements and the continuum of services. In addition, DJJ also saw a reduction in funds and staffing levels as a result of mandated budget reductions between FY 2013 and FY 2017.

The number of direct care funded positions decreased from 1408 in FY 2013 to 647 in FY 2022. The significant average daily population reduction during the pandemic aligned with periods of increased vacancy. This, along with the use of overtime and drafting, allowed the agency to maintain operations despite staffing shortages. It is important to note that anticipated changes to the length of stay guidelines could increase the population forecast in future years, resulting in a greater need for positions.

² Worker's compensation claims for Bon Air for FY 2016 includes Beaumont JCC, which closed in 2017.

³ Worker's Compensation claims may be paid over consecutive years after the claim is originally made.

Figure 4: Direct Care Average Daily Population and Forecast



- » With a shift toward determinate commitments, the direct care population forecast projects growth after FY 2022.
- » The direct care ADP is projected to increase to 229 in FY 2023.
- » The direct care ADP is projected to increase to 305 by FY 2028.

CONCLUSION

Virginia’s Department of Juvenile Justice has undergone a full-scale transformation in recent years. With many of the biggest changes now in place, much of the work going forward will be to sustain these efforts and allow new practices to be refined and improved. DJJ is continually working to provide a better experience for not only the youth and their families but also the communities served through employee engagement and improved public safety. In order to meet these challenges, the agency must be able to successfully recruit and retain staff. To effectively do so, the appropriate mix of compensation, engagement, and employment conditions must be achieved. DJJ will need General Assembly and Administration support to ensure that resources are available to achieve sustainable staffing levels, ensuring public safety throughout DJJ facilities and the Commonwealth.