**Department of Youth Services**

Briefing Fact Sheet

March 2021

**Mission**

*As the juvenile justice agency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Department of Youth Services promotes positive change in the youth in our care and custody. Our mission is to make communities safer by improving the life outcomes for youth in our care. We achieve our mission through investing in highly qualified staff and a service continuum that engages youth, families, and communities in strategies that support positive youth development.*

**Youth Served by DYS**

DYS serves youth between the ages of 12-21 who have been committed to its care and custody by the courts, referred by the police upon arrest, and youth previously committed to its custody who choose to engage in voluntary services with DYS (Youth Engaged in Services or YES). These categories of youth are defined as follows:

* **Youth Committed to DYS’ Care**: Youth detained by the courts either on bail or without the right to bail while awaiting trial for a pending offense or for probation violation proceedings. These youth are commonly referred to as “detained youth.”
* **Youth Committed to DYS’ custody**: Youth committed to the Department’s physical custody after being adjudicated for committing an offense against the Commonwealth. These youth are commonly referred to as “committed youth.” There are two types of juvenile adjudications: adjudication as a delinquent and adjudication as a youthful offender.
  + Adjudicated Delinquent: Youth who are committed to typically the age of 18 after committing a criminal offense against the Commonwealth. Some youth adjudicated delinquent may be committed to DYS to age 19 or 20, if they are not committed until after their 18th or 19th birthday.
  + Adjudicated Youthful Offender: Youth who are committed until the age of 21 after committing felony. In order to be charged and adjudicated youthful offender, a youth must be between the ages of 14-18, and have had a previous DYS commitment, and/or committed certain firearms offenses, and/or committed an offense involving the infliction or the threat of serious bodily harm to another.
* **Youth referred by the Police**: Youth ages 14 to 21 who are arrested outside of court business hours for juvenile offenses may be referred to DYS’ Overnight Arrest (ONA) line by the arresting police department for an ONA placement. In order for DYS to accept a youth referred by the police, the youth must have been ordered held either on a cash bail or without right to bail by a Bail Magistrate. These youth are held in ONA placements until the relevant court reopens.
* **Youth Engaged in Services (YES):** Youth who have attained the age of mandatory discharge from DYS who upon discharge, elect to receive voluntary services from the Department. YES services are available for youth aged 18-22.

**DYS Caseload in CY 2020**

* 570 admissions to DYS detention programs
  + 85% were male and 14% female
  + 21% Caucasian; 31% Black; 40% Hispanic; 0.7% Asian; 8% Other
  + 15.9 was the average age at detention admission
* 510 committed youth served by DYS
  + 89% were male and 11% female
  + 19% Caucasian; 28% Black; 43% Hispanic; 1% Asian; 8% Other
  + 18% of youth were first time commitments
  + 17.5 was the average age of the DYS committed population
* 487 overnight arrest admissions

**Programs Administered**

DYS divides its statewide operations into five service regions: West, Central, Northeast, Southeast, and Metropolitan Boston (Metro). DYS provides a continuum of services and supervision in each region which allows for youth to be served in close geographic proximity to their home community and families. The continuum consists of:

* 40 hardware and staff secure residential programs: Residential placement is determined based on the youth’s status with the Department and assessed risks and needs. There are staff secure and hardware secure residential programs for detained youth, for youth who are receiving treatment post commitment to DYS’ custody, and for youth who are committed to DYS’ custody and face revocation of their conditional liberty.
  + There are separate programs for females and males (youth who identify as transgender are assigned to alternative accommodations on a case-by-case basis).
  + All programs provide education, vocational training, recreational, clinical, medical, and behavioral health services (mental health and substance abuse treatment) to meet a youth’s assessed needs, consistent with the youth’s status with DYS.
* Three (3) Reception Centers: These are community-based options for detained youth who have been charged with offenses and are detained (either with or without right to bail) while awaiting trial or probation violation hearings. These youth are placed in foster homes where they are supervised and monitored by DYS staff.
* Two (2) Transitions to Independent Living Programs: These programs provide residential and extensive community resource development services to older adolescents committed to DYS’ custody whose aftercare plan is designed around independent living or who need more intensive community transition services as they prepare to return home.
* One (1) Independent Living Program: These programs provide safe, supportive housing opportunities for youth committed to DYS’ custody by placing them in individual apartments. The ILP ensures necessary life skill development, provide housing supports and access to needed community-based services in coordination with the DYS casework team in preparation for transition to independence and readiness for adulthood.
* Two (2) Standalone Overnight Arrest (ONA) Programs: These programs are located in the Worcester and Suffolk counties to provide overnight accommodations for youth arrested during evening hours and weekends pending a court appearance for the arrest. In addition, there are ONA beds that have been set aside in 7 detention programs located throughout the state.
* 20 District Offices and Two (2) Satellite Offices: These programs provide supervision and support to youth committed to DYS’ custody who are transitioning back to the community from a DYS residential program. Caseworkers assigned to these offices connect transitioning youth with education and vocational services, job readiness training, behavioral health, medical services and pro-social opportunities.

**DYS Highlights and Progress**

* **Youth Engaged in Services (YES):** This DYS initiative seeks to increase positive youth outcomes and reduce recidivism for youth committed to DYS post discharge. YES allows DYS to continue to provide support to youth during the highest risk period for recidivism—which is the first six months post-discharge. Youth discharging from DYS are offered continuing case management and other transitional supports such as housing, clinical services, continued education, treatment and/or job training in exchange for their voluntary agreement to abide by the terms and conditions of the YES agreement. Youth who initially decline YES services have a 90-day window post discharge to change their minds and enroll in YES.
  + In CY2020, approximately 55% of all youth discharging from DYS opted to engage in a voluntary, YES agreement. The average daily YES population was 170 youth.
  + During CY2020, 296 youth participated in the YES program – 108 youth were enrolled in YES initiative for the first time.
  + Statewide, in CY2020 the average duration of a YES engagement is just over 12 months. The initial six-month period post-discharge is viewed as the highest risk period for recidivism among those exiting the juvenile justice system.

The annual DYS Recidivism Report for the 2016 cohort of discharging youth indicates that YES youth (21%) were less likely to be convicted of an offense within the 3 years following DYS discharge than those youth who opted out of YES.

* **Educational Services and Career Readiness Training:** DYS builds success by supporting youth in their educational attainment. DYS contracts with Commonwealth Corporation/Collaborative for Educational Services to provide instruction and educational services 5.5 hours daily, Monday through Friday. Due to COVID-19 the March MCAS was cancelled so no MCAS data is being reported. Below are the School Year 2019-20 performance data for DYS committed youth enrolled in General Education:
  + 74 youth successfully earned their HS diplomas or Hi-Set
    - 49 diplomas, 3 certificates of completion\* and 22 HiSET/High School Equivalency. \*Certificates of completion are given to youth who have satisfied all the requirements for a high school diploma except the passing of the MCAS.
  + Among the 70 youth who increased their grade level equivalent score between their pre and post-test on the General Assessment of Instructional Need (GAIN), we saw improvement by nearly 2 years in the grade level equivalency score in both English and Math over the course of six months.
  + College Program for School Year 2019-2020:
    - 75 youth participated in post-secondary educational opportunities in residential and the community
    - 21 youth were dually enrolled in high school and college courses
    - 25 youth took college courses taught by college adjunct faculty in 10 DYS facilities statewide
    - 75 dual enrolled and matriculated students took 121 online or in class college courses
    - 68% of the students completed their courses earning 3 college credits per course successfully completed
  + 91 Industry Recognized Credentials were earned in such areas as CPR, First Aid, ServSafe, and OSHA
    - 45 youth earned a CPR: Adult, Infant, Child and First Aid Certification
    - 26 youth earned a CareerSafe OSHA 10: General Industry, Construction Industry Certification
    - 8 youth earned ServSafe Food Handler Certification
    - 7 youth earned a ServSafe Food Manager Certification
    - 3 youth earned an American Screen-Printing Association Certified Screen Printer (ASPA) Certification
    - 1 youth earned an ISSA Personal Trainer Certification
    - 1 youth earned C-Tech Telecommunication Certification
  + 108 youth enrolled in Leadership, Employment, and Advocacy Development (LEAD), an initiative that supports positive youth development through community engagement, work readiness opportunities, and employment activities, and of these:
    - 67 youth received an internship
    - 23 youth received an internship and market employment
    - 18 youth received market employment without an internship
* **DYS Workforce:** DYS currently employees 818 individuals and has 7 open positions throughout the agency for a total of 823 full time employees (FTE). Of the 823:
  + 818 full-time employees
  + 586 (71.2%) are male, 233 (28.3%) are female; 408 (46.1%) are minorities; and 4 (4.3%) veterans
  + average age of the DYS employee is 43
  + 76% is comprised of direct care staff (including those working in the residential programs and the District Offices.

To enhance recruitment and retention efforts, DYS partners with local colleges and universities to develop a strong candidate pool of qualified applicants for Juvenile Justice Youth Development Specialist (JJYDS) positions. DYS has shifted three (3) residential programs to alternative work schedules consisting of four, 10-hour workdays with 3 consecutive days off to attract candidates and offer flexible work opportunities.

* **FY2021 Budget:** DYS FY21 budget is $174.6M
  + $112.4M: Residential services for committed population
  + $27.9M: Services for detained residential population
  + $24.3M: Services for committed non-residential population
  + $4.5M: Administrative account
  + $3.1M: Teacher salaries
  + $2.4M: Overnight Arrest