



January 4, 2024

DJJ Statement on Director Mueller's appointment to director of DCFS

Director Mueller's exceptional leadership of the [Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice](#) (DJJ) spans nearly a decade. Under her guidance, DJJ has become nationally recognized as a leader in juvenile justice reform. She has led DJJ's response to a federal consent decree from the beginning of her tenure in 2014 to the cusp of successfully exiting it in 2024, and developed DJJ from a young department dependent on other agencies to having a robust infrastructure and exceptionally strong leadership team.

In 2020, DJJ launched [the 21st Century Illinois Transformation Plan](#) to reshape the way DJJ cares for youth in its custody. Director Mueller has worked diligently to help the department fulfill its commitment to reduce the harm of incarceration by divesting from the adult prison model, creating a restorative close-to-home model, and building a continuum of care in the community.

Director Mueller's direction has given DJJ a clear mission, clear goals, and a clear vision for the future. The team Director Mueller has assembled at DJJ remains fully committed to accomplishing the mission of building youth skills and strengthening families to promote community safety and positive youth outcomes.

Robert Vickery, Deputy Director of Programs at DJJ, will transition into the role of Interim Director on February 1. Deputy Director Vickery has been a leader in Illinois' juvenile justice reform efforts throughout his 20 year career. He has managed all programming and services for youth in DJJ custody for the past seven years, and under his guidance DJJ has achieved and sustained substantial compliance with all of the behavioral health and programming requirements of the federal RJ consent decree. He is also leading key components of the 21st Century Transformation Plan, including upgrades to the agency's intake process, increased partnerships with innovative and transformative community partners, and engagement with families and former DJJ youth to improve the juvenile justice system.

Deputy Director Vickery stated, "Anyone who has encountered Director Mueller knows that her work is rooted in care for the young people and families we serve at DJJ. It has been a privilege to work alongside Director Mueller and I wish her the best in her new role at DCFS. I'm truly and deeply confident about DJJ's path forward, and I am also excited for children and families across the state of Illinois touched by the child welfare system who will now benefit from her leadership."

Healthy kids, strong families, safe communities