



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 4, 2025

CONTACT: Dominique Newman

dominique.newman@illinois.gov

Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice opens Monarch Youth Center in Lincoln to serve youth in central Illinois

LINCOLN – Today the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) celebrated the grand opening of a new youth center that will serve youth from central Illinois who are in state custody.

The [Monarch Youth Center](#) has a 30 bed capacity and is located on the site of the former Lincoln Developmental Center. The youth center is a result of Gov. Pritzker & Lt. Gov. Stratton's [21st Century Transformation Plan](#) that was announced in 2020. The plan focuses on reducing the harm of incarceration by transitioning youth to smaller, regional residential centers closer to their communities, and investing in community wraparound support and intervention services for justice-involved youth.

"The opening of Monarch Youth Center is an exciting, concrete step toward improving the quality of life for central Illinois' most vulnerable youth," **said Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton**. "One of the primary goals of my office's Justice, Equity, and Opportunity initiative is to utilize restorative, inclusive, and cutting-edge practices and programs to transform Illinois' criminal legal system. Monarch Youth Center will do just that, by giving youth who will reenter society a toolbox full of what they need to thrive."

The Monarch Youth Center offers:

- High school education
- Career and technical education training in construction and culinary arts
- Behavioral and mental health services, including substance use treatment
- Indoor and outdoor recreational spaces

"The Monarch Youth Center was designed with unique therapeutic and rehabilitative spaces," **said Robert Vickery, acting director of IDJJ**. "Monarch has ample natural light, outdoor green spaces, bright colors, and family friendly spaces. It was designed with youth and staff input to reflect best practices in trauma informed care."

Monarch Youth Center is named after the monarch butterfly, which emerges from hibernation completely transformed, and is the state insect of Illinois. The symbolism of the monarch's amazing transformation is central in IDJJ's vision for youth who will be housed and rehabilitated at the new center.

IDJJ is partnering with the [Illinois Department of Natural Resources](#) (IDNR) to bring monarch butterflies to the Monarch Youth Center, along with educational programming for youth at the facility.

Monarch Youth Center brings over 90 jobs to the region. Jobs include administrative roles, mental health positions, nurses, educators, leisure time specialists, youth and family specialists, dietary workers, and juvenile justice specialists, who provide security and direct care for youth.



"The new Monarch Youth Center in Lincoln represents an important investment in our community," said **State Senator Sally Turner (R-Beason)**. "This facility will bring good jobs and economic growth to our region, while also providing a structured environment that helps young people get back on track."

The inaugural academy of juvenile justice specialists graduated on August 29 and staff will welcome young men to the facility in the next several weeks.

Community partnerships and volunteers are also being sought for the new youth center. "We welcome local non-profit and faith-based organizations who wish to partner with us in our work to rehabilitate youth," said **Tyrie Fluker, superintendent of Monarch Youth Center**. "Volunteers are essential to the work we do." Fluker noted that inquiries regarding volunteering at Monarch Youth Center can be directed to Assistant Superintendent of Programs Andre Brown at andre.brown@illinois.gov.

Construction and renovations at Monarch Youth Center began the summer of 2023. "The town of Lincoln has been an incredible partner throughout the entire process," said **Bill Peyton, IDJJ Project Manager for Monarch Youth Center**. "From Mayor Welch, to the fire and police chiefs, to the Lincoln Park District, IDJJ is incredibly grateful for the ongoing help and cooperation from local officials."

Funding and oversight for the construction and renovations of Monarch Youth Center came from the [Illinois Capital Development Board](#). "The Monarch Youth Center's design prioritizes healing and support," said **TJ Edwards, executive director of the Illinois Capital Development Board**. "We were able to reclaim a long-vacant site to create a facility where youth can stay connected to their communities, surrounded by trauma-informed environments." In addition to renovating several buildings already on site, a new multipurpose building was constructed on the campus of Monarch.

"The Monarch Youth Center is a result of strong collaboration with the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, our City Council, and Department Heads," said **Tracy Welch, mayor of Lincoln**. "This facility brings structure and second chances, supports families, and grows our local economy. It's a milestone achievement for Lincoln."

###

The [Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice \(IDJJ\)](#) was created by statute in 2006 with the mandate of safely housing and rehabilitating youth committed to its custody. The mission of IDJJ is to promote community safety and positive youth outcomes by building youth skills and strengthening families.