

December 1, 2014

TO: Governor's Office/Illinois General Assembly

Over the past year, the Advisory Board of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ or the Department) has met on a quarterly basis with IDJJ's Director, Candice Jones, and her executive staff to discuss plans, strategize and offer advice and guidance for the continued implementation of the Department's goals and objectives. The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice's 2014 Annual Report highlights both the Department's progress to improve the outcomes of youth committed to their custody, and the continued and anticipated challenges.

The meetings between the Advisory Board and IDJJ executive staff this past year have been highly productive, including discussions and planning related to:

- the expansion of IDJJ's aftercare model;
- the implementation of policies and practices related to the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA);
- restructuring in response to facility closures;
- improvement of IDJJ's planning and research capabilities, including improved data systems for improved communication;
- increasing contact between youth and family;
- improved mental health and educational services;
- the importance of recognizing the limited, targeted youth population that will be committed to IDJJ in the future, and educating the legislative and executive branches about these youth; and
- managing the different needs of youth committed to IDJJ as a result of changes in age of juvenile court jurisdiction and shifts in sentencing practices.

The Advisory Board notes the dedication and hard work of the IDJJ's Director and executive team and commends them for this year's accomplishments. For example, IDJJ has implemented policies and practices to reduce the use of confinement, and promote positive behavioral changes using facility wide incentives programs that promote respect, safety, and responsible behavior.

However, the Department continues to face challenges posed by youth with significant rehabilitative needs, and a consent decree which mandates significant improvement to the education and mental health services IDJJ youth receive, as well as the facilities themselves in order to ensure safe work and living environments for staff and youth. The Advisory Board is confident that, with the continued support from the Governor's Office and the Illinois General Assembly, IDJJ's leadership team will continue its progress towards its mission which is to enhance public safety and positive outcomes through youth-centered, individualized rehabilitative services within a safe and supportive environment.

The Advisory Board looks forward to working with IDJJ's Director and Deputy Directors, the Governor, and Illinois General Assembly in furtherance of the Department's mission.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Vollen-Katz, *DJJ Advisory Board Chair*

Julie Biehl

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Candice Jones, Director, Department of Juvenile Justice (ex-officio)