



Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC)

Division of Juvenile Services

Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment Progress Report February 2020-December 2020

Summary

On February 25th, 2020, the Center for Children Law and Policy (CCLP), the Juvenile Justice Research and Reform Lab at Drexel University, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy completed the *Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment* (the “Assessment” hereafter). This Assessment was funded by the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) and counseled by the Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment & Reinvestment Taskforce.

The Assessment listed approximately 50 Short-Term, Medium Term, and Long-Term recommendations of improvements to the Juvenile Justice System. ¹This *Progress Report* will outline the advancements made in these three areas: Program Development, System Collaboration, and Community Initiatives.

1 PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

(See page 133 goal 3-8, page 134 goal 16, and page 135 goal 16 for this section)

- October 2019, MDOC contracted with **Youth Advocate Programs (YAP)** to provide advocates to support justice involved youth in the community. The contract with the Second Chance Act grant expansion can serve up to 32 youth per year. YAP has currently served 26 youth.
- MDOC opened **STEPS Program** (‘Support,’ ‘Teaching,’ ‘Encourage,’ ‘Prepare,’ and ‘Send-off’) in December 2020, which is a non-institutional/staff secure level of care setting for girls who are currently on detained and/or committed status. By using the combined elements of TIER (trauma informed practices, strength-based practices, cultural competency, and motivational interviewing) the STEPS community provides an ideal setting for youth to learn and live in. Staff at STEPS will assist youth by providing support, structure, and consistent expectations for all residents. The strength-based, individualized, and gender responsive approach will help youth make a healthy transition back to the community. **STEPS will further the capacity in reducing institutional secure confinement and ultimately eliminate girl’s incarceration.**
- Long Creek staff in the STEPS Program was trained in **TIER Program** (Trauma Informed Effective Reinforcement System), which is a research-based gender responsive and trauma informed behavior management program.
- MDOC hired a **Credible Messenger** Coordinator to expand Credible Messenger programming across the state, to specifically serve juvenile involved youth of color, which is an evidenced-based model of **Transformative Mentoring**.
- MDOC provided **New Beginnings** additional funds to increase staffing to serve additional MDOC youth, in attendant care and in the transitional living program, as a community-based alternative to Long Creek.



¹ Center for Children’s Law and Policy et al. (2020). *Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment*.

- In Region 3, an evidence-based interactive journaling model was piloted (**Change Curriculum Program**) to improve prosocial skills for youth under MDOC supervision. Between May 1st, 2020 and October 31st, 2020, the journals saw a 92% improvement in reported behaviors across all successfully completed journals.
- MDOC has developed a **Field Training Officer (FTO)** program, identifying 6 FTO's, 2 per region, to improve training and practices for all Juvenile Community Corrections Officers. FTO's specifically target skill development in risk assessment, case planning, motivational interviewing, and LGBTQ + training.

2 SYSTEM COLLABORATION

(See page 133 goal 8, 14, page 134 goal 16, and page 135 goal 6, 15 for this section)

- MDOC developed 3 **Regional Care Teams**, that include private and public stakeholders, to review high-needs youth to increase access to community programming and prevent secure confinement. Each team was provided with **flex funds** from the JJAG to support this work.
- Long Creek has created a new intake process targeting length of stay (LOS) in secure confinement. For Committed youth, LOS was **reduced by 13%**.
- Through internal and external collaboration with stakeholders MDOC was able to all but eliminate youth detained **3 days or less** as recommended by the Assessment.
- Through new program and community initiatives and collaborations MDOC was able to achieve a secure confinement population **reduction of 50%** within the last year.
- MDOC, Division of Juvenile Services has improved public access and transparency through the updated **website**. The Juvenile Services Webpage provides Statistical Data Reports and current initiatives.

COMMITMENT	Reduction of 34%
DETENTION	Reduction of 69 %
OVERALL	Reduction of 50%
2020 NEW COMMITMENTS	13

Please visit the new MDOC website at: <https://www.maine.gov/corrections/juvenile-services>

3 COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

(See page 133 goal 3-8, page 134 goal 16, and page 135 goal 1-5, 16 for this section)

- MDOC was successful in assisting Aroostook Band of Micmacs in applying for, *OJJDP Delinquency Prevention Program*, with the Boys and Girls Club of Presque Isle which awarded **\$500,000** over 5 years. This grant focuses on justice involved youth or youth at-risk for system involvement by supplying evidence-based practices and cultural pro-social activities in their community.
- MDOC continues to work with **Vera Institute** regularly to address needs of girls in the juvenile justice system. Vera provides collaboration and recommendations on gender-specific programming across Juvenile Facility and Juvenile Community Corrections.
- **MDOC**, with funding from the **JJAG** and the **John T. Gorman Foundation**, is in the process of developing a **Community Outreach Expansion Pilot Program**, which includes a Community Diversion Team, a Youth and Family Engagement Specialist, and Credible Messenger Programming. This program will directly address Racial and Ethnic Disparities in a targeted community. The braided funding from the above entities will go directly to a community provider.
 - The **Youth and Family Engagement Specialist** will be a full-time specialist to connect with youth and families of color in the Lewiston/Auburn area. The specialist will provide case management services assist in service connection and be a culturally competent facilitator of the Community Diversion Team. The **Community Diversion Team** is a collaborative group of stakeholders and providers, who meet frequently, to address diversion for youth of color.

2021 WORK-PLAN/GOALS

- 1. Intensive Outpatient Therapy (IOP):** Across the state, particularly Penobscot, Aroostook, and Washington county, they have seen an increase in substance use challenges by justice involved youth. MDOC will partner with **Office of Behavioral Health /Department of Health and Human Services** to increase capacity; improve access to substance use treatment for rural youth; increase access and capacity to substance use services; and, increase access to substance use assessment and treatment, while working towards reducing use of secure confinement for treatment needs.
- 2. Identifying a staff-secure community residence** to house boys transitioning out of Long Creek. The program will be staffed and resourced by redeploying and redirecting Long Creek staff and resources into the community. Implementing this program will further reduce the MDOC's reliance on institutional secure confinement, by creating a normative community residence to safely support male residents to transition out of Long Creek. This program will also contribute to further **reducing the length of stay** for committed youth.
- 3. Conduct a needs assessment** to develop plan to place the current population in need of secure confinement into **smaller secure residences** more appropriately/regionally placed in Maine. The plan will outline the redistribution of staff and all other resources to provide secure programming in recommended locations. The plan will also identify cost savings in personnel services and all other resources from Long Creek's budget, the resources will be used to fund capital expenditures to construct and/or refurbish existing structures to meet this need.
- 4. Partner with the Department of Education** to increase capacity for restorative justice programming in schools and for justice involved youth.
- 5. MDOC will complete a monthly Secure Population Dashboard** on the website (<https://www.maine.gov/corrections/juvenile-services>) to inform the public on secure confinement reduction and provide yearly Overview Reports. MDOC is committed to improving the data collection process to make data-driven decisions and will work collaboratively to create a process for **integrating data systems** across child-serving agencies.
- 6. MDOC is committed to seeking federal and state funding opportunities** to serve unique populations, while continuing to expand Youth Advocate Programs to serve front-end youth and expand Credible Messenger Programs statewide.