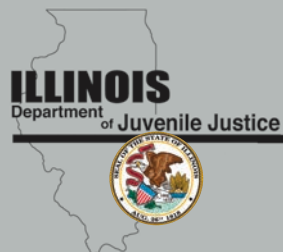


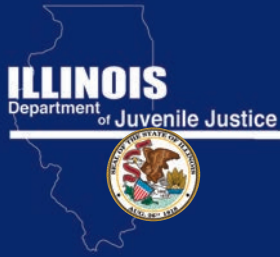
# IMPROVING YOUTH OUTCOMES

Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice  
2015 Operating Plan Summary

**CANDICE JONES**  
*Director*

**THE HONORABLE BRUCE RAUNER**  
*Governor*





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## Mission

**The mission of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice is to enhance public safety and positive youth outcomes by providing strength-based individualized services to youth in a safe learning and treatment environment so that they may successfully reintegrate into their communities.**

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## Acknowledgment

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in the development and publication of this plan.

The MacArthur Foundation supports juvenile justice reform in 35 states and aims to help accelerate a national reform movement to improve the lives of young people in trouble with the law, while enhancing public safety and holding young offenders accountable for their actions.

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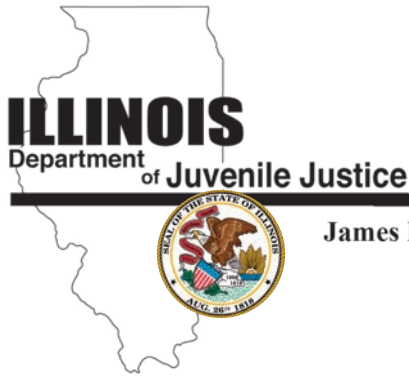
# IMPROVING YOUTH OUTCOMES

## Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice 2015 Operating Plan Summary

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### Table of Contents

- 2 Letter from the Director
  
- 4-8 IDJJ Plan Priorities and Initiatives
  - 4 **RIGHT-SIZE:** Reduce the Use of Secure Custody for Low-Risk Youth
  
  - 5 **REHABILITATE:** Improve Programs to Meet the Needs of High-Risk Youth
  
  - 6 **REINTEGRATE:** Improve Programs to Ensure Successful Reentry
  
  - 7 **RESPECT:** Create a Safe and Respectful Environment for Youth and Staff
  
  - 8 **REPORT:** Increase Transparency and Accountability
  
- 9 IDJJ Leadership



**Bruce Rauner**  
Governor

**Candice Jones**  
Director

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## Dear Illinois Leaders,

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice has two goals:

- Make Illinois communities safer for all residents.
- Foster better life outcomes for youth in the Department’s custody by providing appropriate and effective rehabilitative care.

This is extraordinarily challenging work. Since the Department was created by the Illinois legislature in 2006, it has struggled to fulfill its mission. While there are several reasons the Department has struggled, the net result has been an agency not adequately equipped to improve the lives of those in its custody, including some of Illinois’ most troubled youth. Today, however, we have good models across the country and committed leadership within the Department and the State to move forward. On the pages that follow, you will learn the specifics of how we plan to accomplish this in 2015.

### ***An Evolving Model of Youth Corrections***

The Department of Juvenile Justice was created because of a growing recognition that a traditional prison-based system does not work well for youth. Research and experience continue to confirm that youth in the juvenile justice system need high-quality programs to address education, mental health, and substance use issues, but youth prisons often do a poor job providing such services. At the same time, research and experience have demonstrated that youth are especially responsive to rehabilitation. Many states around the country have concluded that if our primary purpose is to rehabilitate youth and protect the public from juvenile crime, incarcerating youth is often not the best way to accomplish these goals. Indeed, too many of our youth emerge from incarceration posing a greater threat to the public than when they entered.

We can and must do better. Based on best practice models from around the country, we must provide an effective continuum of care for youth while in Department custody and upon release. We must make facilities safer for staff and youth. We must do more to foster rehabilitation of youth and their successful reintegration into the community, where ongoing services, support, and positive relationships are available. We must reserve secure care placement for only the highest-risk youth and, when it is safe to do so, serve youth where they are served best—in programs close to home.

### ***A Plan for Action***

To help fulfill the Department's mission and to direct our actions, the agency has developed and is now implementing a comprehensive operating plan for 2015. This plan represents a collaboration among Department staff, youth, advocates, legislators, and expert partners—the Vera Institute of Justice and Business and Professional People for the Public Interest (BPI)—and it reflects suggestions from all who participated in crafting it. Generously funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, our plan details the priority initiatives the Department will undertake in 2015 and beyond. Some of these initiatives are already underway.

### ***Five Core Priorities***

Five core priorities will drive the Department's efforts to create safer communities and improve youth outcomes in the year ahead:

- **Right-Size:** Reduce the Use of Secure Custody for Low-Risk Youth
- **Rehabilitate:** Improve Programs to Meet the Needs of High-Risk Youth
- **Reintegrate:** Improve Programs to Ensure Successful Reentry
- **Respect:** Create a Safe and Respectful Environment for Youth and Staff
- **Report:** Increase Transparency and Accountability

The plan establishes a concrete action agenda that will advance the Department of Juvenile Justice on a clear path forward, ensuring that it fulfills its statutory charge to reduce recidivism and protect public safety. Importantly, this plan marks the beginning of a multi-year effort to ensure that the State of Illinois is fully vested in the lives of youth and the health of our communities.

I look forward to reporting our progress to you midway through the year and on a continuing basis thereafter, as we continue our efforts to create a Department that is both more effective and more humane.

Sincerely,



Candice Jones  
Director

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# RIGHT-SIZE

## Reduce the Use of Secure Custody for Low-Risk Youth

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**Goal: Place youth in secure facilities only when they pose a significant risk to public safety and when community-based treatment is not a viable option.**

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) is committed to serving youth in the most appropriate setting—and that is not always within a facility. There is an emerging consensus among juvenile system experts that long-term stays in facilities should be limited to higher-risk youth for whom community-based approaches may be less appropriate. Research shows that secure custody offers little if any rehabilitative benefits to low-risk youth, and may in fact increase their risk of recidivism. Moreover, Illinois law requires that

juvenile offenders be placed in the least restrictive setting possible based on their level of risk.

In recent years, IDJJ has made substantial progress reducing the number of youth housed in secure facilities, an effort which has not resulted in an increase in juvenile crime. Allowing a greater number of low-risk individuals to remain in the community and out of facilities will better help those youth and enable IDJJ to devote resources to youth who need them most.

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**Initiative 1:**  
Advocate for legislation that would exclude youth convicted of low-level misdemeanors from being sentenced to IDJJ custody.

**Initiative 2:**  
Advocate for legislation that would base the length of post-release supervision on a clearly articulated statutory term.

**Initiative 3:**  
Advocate for legislation that would remove youth with pending adult criminal charges from IDJJ facilities.

**Initiative 4:**  
Institute the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI)—an objective, reliable assessment tool to measure risk and guide placement decisions. The YASI will enable IDJJ to determine which

youth can be safely treated in the community and identify areas of need, so that IDJJ can better serve its rehabilitative role.

**Initiative 5:**  
Use the YASI to identify low-risk youth currently incarcerated who would be better served by community-based treatment and to accelerate their release to more appropriate settings.

**Initiative 6:**  
Develop and implement a system of graduated sanctions based on the nature of the infraction for youth on Aftercare, IDJJ's post-release supervision program. A graduated sanctions matrix will ensure IDJJ custody is used only when necessary for public safety. The matrix will support keeping low-risk youth safely in the community and ensure they are not unnecessarily returned to IDJJ custody for minor infractions.

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# REHABILITATE

## Improve Programs to Meet the Needs of High-Risk Youth

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**Goal: Ensure that each IDJJ youth has an individualized support plan with access to a range of high-quality mental health and counseling services, along with an array of educational, vocational, and life-skills programming.**

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To provide youth in the system with effective supports, IDJJ requires the best possible information about each youth's needs. This year, IDJJ will begin using the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI), a highly regarded evidence-based risk and needs assessment tool, to objectively and reliably assess youths' strengths and needs, diagnose mental health and substance use problems, and develop clear plans for rehabilitation from intake through Aftercare supervision. The assessment tool will enable clinicians to fairly determine when it is appropriate to return a youth to the community and what kind of support he/she should receive upon release.

Several studies reveal high rates of mental health needs in IDJJ facilities. One study showed that two-thirds of

youth in custody had a diagnosed psychiatric disorder, and IDJJ data shows that just under 70 percent are classified as having some type of mental health need. IDJJ is expanding its capacity to provide higher-risk, higher-need youth with quality mental health and counseling services. IDJJ will hire new staff to ensure that these youth receive the support they need.

Additionally, many youth arrive at IDJJ facilities with poor academic records. IDJJ will take steps to ensure that youth in custody have the same educational opportunities as any student to increase their likelihood of success when they return home. New vocational programs will provide youth with job skills useful for life after release.

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**Initiative 1:**  
Develop individual case plans as soon as youth arrive at an IDJJ facility.

**Initiative 2:**  
Provide comprehensive, individualized mental health services with expanded, well-trained staff and supervisors.

**Initiative 3:**  
Provide comprehensive, individualized substance use programs and services.

**Initiative 4:**  
Provide engaging and effective educational programs in facilities with an expanded staff of teachers and specialists and a longer day of quality education.

**Initiative 5:**  
Hire professional, highly trained staff to meet the needs of youth entitled to special education services.

**Initiative 6:**  
Design and deliver an array of vocational education programs and college level courses to better prepare youth for employment.

**Initiative 7:**  
Make it easier for youth to maintain strong ties with family and other supportive people in their lives, since research and experience show that youth who have such support will exhibit better behavior and make a more successful return to the community.

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# REINTEGRATE

## Improve Programs to Ensure Successful Reentry

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**Goal: Ensure that youth released from IDJJ facilities receive the breadth of services, supports, and placements that help them successfully reenter the community and not return to IDJJ custody.**

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A key goal of IDJJ reform is to ensure that youth have the support they need to succeed when they return to their communities. Strong reentry support is essential to helping formerly incarcerated youth succeed in the community and reducing the number who return to IDJJ custody. Recently, IDJJ replaced its parole system with Aftercare specialists who take a holistic, youth-centric approach to supervision, working one-on-one with youth in their communities to continue the rehabilitative work begun in IDJJ facilities.

Aftercare workers provide comprehensive case management services that help youth take advantage of a range of therapeutic, community-based services.

IDJJ is tackling a number of challenges that impede Aftercare success, including high caseloads, scarce resources, and poor data management. The Department is also working hard to find ways to hold youth accountable to post-release case plans without returning them to IDJJ facilities unnecessarily.

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**Initiative 1:**  
Build relationships between youth and Aftercare workers as soon as a youth is placed in an IDJJ facility, so that planning for a successful return to the community begins almost the moment a youth enters the facility.

**Initiative 2:**  
Ensure that reentry plans are individualized, based on an objective assessment tool, and provide for the full range of services that a youth requires to make a successful transition back to the community.

**Initiative 3:**  
Reduce and balance Aftercare caseloads so that Aftercare workers are able to provide a higher level of care to youth who need it most.

**Initiative 4:**  
Expand and support the role of quality community providers to meet the post-release needs of justice-involved youth within the community.

**Initiative 5:**  
Foster partnerships between IDJJ, the Department of Children and Family Services, and the Department of Human Services to facilitate successful placements in programs designed to foster successful reentry.



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# RESPECT

Create a Safe and Respectful Environment for Youth and Staff

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**Goal: Create both an organizational culture and physical environment in each IDJJ facility that promotes care, respect, and positive youth development while ensuring the safety and well-being of all who live and work there.**

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IDJJ staff must maintain safety and security in facilities, while respecting youths' Constitutional rights and fostering an environment focused on positive youth development. This requires a sufficient number of well-trained staff. IDJJ will increase the ratio of staff to youth in its facilities, both by increasing the number of staff and by serving lower-risk youth in the community rather than within IDJJ facilities.

Staff training is also crucial, and IDJJ is in the process of revamping its training and development

opportunities for new and existing staff. A primary focus for staff training will be holding youth accountable. Evidence shows that frequent use of restraints and prolonged confinement of youth result in worse behavior, not better. New and better tools will be introduced to deal with these challenging situations.

Currently, security staff is being trained in behavior management methods that defuse conflict and promote good behavior without resorting to drastic punishments.

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**Initiative 1:**  
Ensure that all facilities are adequately staffed to fulfill youth needs and maintain safety.

**Initiative 2:**  
Provide youth-focused, skills-based training for all new facility staff and Aftercare workers.

**Initiative 3:**  
Train facility staff and Aftercare workers in crisis management, de-escalation, trauma-informed care, and positive behavior and incentive systems.

**Initiative 4:**  
Expand use of well-tested, strength-based behavioral management strategies.

**Initiative 5:**  
Implement policies that minimize use of restraints and confinement.

**Initiative 6:**  
Provide continuing professional development opportunities that enable staff to collaborate, provide feedback, and effectively implement reform efforts.

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# REPORT

## Increase Transparency and Accountability

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**Goal: Enhance IDJJ communications and management information systems to strengthen operations, improve youth outcomes, increase safety, and more effectively inform stakeholders and the public.**

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IDJJ will make significant and comprehensive changes in its operations over the next year. To support these changes, IDJJ will introduce a data management system that will enable the Department to measure how well IDJJ programs are working and how well individual youth are progressing. This data system will be used to

support better decision-making about plans for individual youth and to help the Department determine how and where to make further improvements in programs, policies, and procedures. The new data management system will also help make better information about IDJJ progress available to the public.

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**Initiative 1:**  
Develop a data management system that enables IDJJ to track youth progress, measure program effectiveness, and inform decision-making.

**Initiative 2:**  
Publicly report data on justice-involved youth and their outcomes.

**Initiative 3:**  
Create a management information system for Department personnel that makes it easier to identify and address staffing needs.

**Initiative 4:**  
Coordinate IDJJ data systems with DCFS, DHS, and Illinois counties to consolidate information from all points of contact with youth and produce better decision-making about individual youth and more effective delivery of services.

**Initiative 5:**  
Communicate new youth-specific IDJJ policies to Department staff at all levels.

**Initiative 6:**  
Establish a system of regular feedback from direct-care staff to supervisors, administrators, and IDJJ leadership.

**Initiative 7:**  
Expand efforts to engage community stakeholders at all IDJJ facilities with regular community meetings in which business people, local leaders, volunteers, and others can generate ideas regarding new ways the community might assist IDJJ youth.

**Initiative 8:**  
Release six-month progress report on IDJJ 2015 Operating Plan implementation.

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## Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice Leadership

**Candice Jones**  
Director

**Marna Goodman**  
Chief of Training  
and Professional  
Development

**Eva Moore**  
Deputy Director of  
Aftercare

**Kiersten Neswick**  
Chief Financial Officer

**Beth Compton**  
Chief Legal Counsel

**Jessica McMiller-Baptiste**  
Chief of Staff

**Heidi Mueller**  
Deputy Director of  
Programs

**Mary Reynolds**  
Chief of  
Intergovernmental  
Relations

**Gloria Davis**  
School  
Superintendent

**Jesse Montgomery**  
Deputy Director of  
Operations

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## Administrative Staff

**Todd Creviston**  
Labor Relations  
Administrator

**Dr. Jennifer Jaworksi**  
Chief of Mental  
Health Services

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## Illinois Youth Center Facility Superintendents

**Olukayode Idowu**  
Chicago

**William Peyton**  
Harrisburg

**Jeff Bargar**  
St. Charles

**Kevwe Akpore**  
Kewanee

**Jamie House**  
Pere Marquette

**Judy Davis**  
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Governor**

**Candice Jones  
Director**

