

Massachusetts Department of Youth Services

Briefing Fact Sheet

April 2022



Mission

The Department of Youth Services fosters positive outcomes for youth, builds safer communities, and collaborates for an equitable and fair justice system.

Vision

We envision a Commonwealth in which every young person has the skills, supports, and resources necessary to engage safely with their communities, and lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Values

- **Fairness:** We value fairness in our treatment of youth in our care, their families and community supports, and our staff and partners. We support increased fairness across all aspects of our justice system through strong and transparent relationships with our partners and collaborators.
- **Transparency:** We believe that the processes by which we make our consequential decisions matter, and we are open and forthcoming about what information is informing our decisions, and who is the final authority.
- **Racial Equity:** We believe that racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if our racial identities no longer predicted how we fare in life. Achieving this state requires absolute elimination of all policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that lead to differential outcomes by race. We strive to ensure that the impacts of our work reduce and mitigate racial and other disparities within DYS, within our communities, in our justice system, and beyond.
- **Integrity:** We value honesty, fair processes, and full accountability for our actions.

Youth Served by DYS

DYS serves youth between the ages of 12-21 who have been adjudicated delinquent, adjudicated as a youthful offender, or placed in DYS' overnight arrest beds and/or detention programs while awaiting a future court date. Within these broad categories, DYS serves:

- Overnight Arrest Youth: Arrested outside of court business hours and held either on a cash bail or without the right to bail awaiting an appearance in court.
- Detained Youth: Charged with offenses and detained either with or without right to bail while awaiting trial or probation violation hearings.
- Adjudicated Delinquent Youth: Committed until the age of 18 for committing a felony or misdemeanor.
- Adjudicated Youthful Offender: Committed until the age of 21 when the youth, between the ages of 14-18, committed a felony and had a previous DYS commitment, and/or committed certain firearms offenses and/or committed an offense involving the infliction or the threat of serious bodily harm to another.

DYS Caseload in CY 2021

- 564 admissions to DYS detention programs
 - 83.2% were male and 16.8% female
 - 21.6% Caucasian; 32.3% Black; 42.2% Hispanic; 1.1% Asian; 2.8% Other
 - 16.1 was the average age at detention admission
- 387 committed youth served by DYS
 - 86.6% were male and 13.4% female
 - 15.6% Caucasian; 29.5% Black; 46.6% Hispanic; 0.8% Asian; 6.8% Other
 - 30.5% of youth were first time commitments
 - 17.8 was the average age of the DYS committed population
- 451 overnight arrest admissions

Programs Administered

DYS divides its operations across five geographic regions which allows DYS to provide a continuum of services and supervision where youth may be served in close geographic proximity to their home community and families. The continuum consists of:

- 36 hardware and staff secure residential programs with a range of security levels into which youth are placed depending on their status and risk level. Residential placement is determined based on the youth's status, which includes detention, assessment, commitment, and revocation.
 - There are separate programs for females and males (youth who identify as transgender are assigned to alternative placement placed based on their preference on a case-by-case basis, depending on self-identification and safety measures). All programs provide education, recreational, clinical, medical, and behavioral health services (mental health and substance abuse treatment) to

meet a youth's assessed needs. Some locations also provide vocational training opportunities.

- **Three (3) Reception Centers:** These are community-based options for detained youth with a low risk profile who have been charged with offenses and are detained (either with or without bail) while awaiting trial or probation violation hearings. Placed in foster homes, these youth are supervised and monitored by DYS staff.
- **One (1) Independent Living Program:** These programs provide safe, supportive housing opportunities for youth in individual apartments. The ILP ensures necessary life skill development, provide housing supports and access to needed community-based services in coordination with the DYS casework team in preparation for transition to independence and readiness for adulthood.
- **Two (2) Standalone Overnight Arrest Locations:** These programs located in Worcester and Suffolk counties provide overnight accommodations for youth arrested during evening hours and weekends pending their initial court appearance. In addition, there are overnight arrest beds that have been set aside in 6 staff secure programs located throughout the state.
- **20 District Offices and Two (2) Satellite Offices:** These programs provide supervision and support to youth transitioning back to the community from a DYS residential program. Caseworkers in these programs connect transitioning youth with education and vocational services, job readiness training, behavioral health, medical services, and pro-social opportunities.
 - There are also two (2) Transitions to Independent Living Programs, which provide residential and extensive community resource development services to older adolescents whose aftercare plan is designed around independent living or who need more intensive community transition services as they prepare to return home.

DYS Highlights and Progress

- **Youth Engaged in Services (YES):** This DYS initiative seeks to increase positive youth outcomes and reduce recidivism for DYS-involved youth. YES allows DYS to continue to provide support to youth during the highest risk period for recidivism—which is the first six months post-discharge. Youth discharging from DYS are offered continuing case management and other transitional supports such as housing, clinical services, continued education, treatment and/or job training in exchange for their voluntary agreement to abide by the terms and conditions of the YES agreement. Youth who initially decline YES services currently have a 90-day window post discharge to change their minds and enroll in YES.
 - In CY2021, approximately 68% of all youth discharging from DYS opted to engage in a YES agreement. The average daily YES population was 177 youth.
 - During CY2021, 315 youth participated in the YES program – 285 youth were enrolled in YES initiative for the first time.

- Statewide, in CY2021 the average duration of a YES engagement is just over 12 months. The initial six-month period post-discharge is viewed as the highest risk period for recidivism among those exiting the juvenile justice system.

The annual DYS Recidivism Report for the 2016 cohort of discharging youth indicates that YES youth (21%) were less likely to be convicted of an offense within the 3 years following DYS discharge than those youth who opted out of YES.

- **Educational Services and Career Readiness Training:** DYS builds success by supporting youth in their educational attainment. In 2020-21 school year DYS contracted with Commonwealth Corporation/Collaborative for Educational Services to provide instruction and educational services 5.5 hours daily, Monday through Friday. Below are the School Year (SY) 2020-21 performance data for DYS committed youth enrolled in General Education:
 - In the spring of 2021, 49 youth took the 10th grade MCAS ELA competency exam while in the care and custody of DYS. 41 of these youth (83.7%) passed.
 - In the spring of 2021, 53 youth took the 10th grade Next Generation MCAS Mathematics competency exam 31 of these youth (58.5%) passed.
 - In the spring of 2021, 21 youth took the high school MCAS Science competency exam. 4 of these youth (19.0%) passed.
 - 72 youth successfully earned their HS diplomas or HiSET
 - 47 diplomas, 2 certificates of completion* and 23 HiSET/High School Equivalency. *Certificates of completion are given to youth who have satisfied all the requirements for a high school diploma except the passing of the MCAS.
 - In SY2021, the average grade level equivalent (GLE) score -- among individual youth' first tests of the year in English were 6.5 (middle of 6th grade), and in Math was 5.8 (end of 5th grade). Among youth who took a posttest in SY2021 and who increased their grade level equivalent score (about half of youth), they improved their grade level equivalency score in both English and Math by about 1.5 years over the course of five and six months attending DYS classes. College Program for School Year 2020-21:
 - In the Spring of 2021, more than half of the enrollments in the College Program were dual enrollments (28 of 52 enrollments).
 - 98 students in post-secondary educational opportunities in residential and the community
 - 59% of the students completed their courses earning 3 college credits per course successfully completed
 - 172 Industry Recognized Credentials were earned in such areas as CPR, First Aid, ServSafe, and OSHA
 - 42 youth earned CPR: Adult, Infant, Child and First Aid Certification

- 96 youth earned CareerSafe OSHA 10: General Industry/Construction Industry
 - 34 youth earned ServSafe Food Handler
- 152 youth enrolled in Leadership, Employment, and Advocacy Development (LEAD), an initiative that supports positive youth development through community engagement, work readiness opportunities, and employment activities, and of these:
 - 98 (65%) of youth gained work experiences in the LEAD program
 - 71 youth participated in subsidized work experiences through internships, mini-internships, pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships
 - 52 youth gained market employment
- An updated version of the Empower Your Future (EYF) life, education, and career skills curriculum was piloted in 5 residential facilities across the state. This youth-centered initiative connects classroom activities to life skills needed for future goals, integrating clinical services and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills.
- On-the-job training programs were continued in residential facilities across the state, employing youth in positions to gain soft and technical skills. In addition to the culinary, carpentry, and silk screen programs already in place, four additional programs were developed - two horticulture, one maintenance, and one store management.
- The Exclusive Tees silk screen social enterprise grew to serve youth from two additional programs, and sales for this social enterprise grew 150% to nearly \$100K. Youth are compensated for their work and given a supported opportunity to understand real-world demands of the workplace.
- 15 arts opportunities were offered in across the state, offering youth the opportunity to engage with professional artists in a myriad of different art forms including music production, Shakespeare, improvisational theater, fashion, entrepreneurship, dance, poetry, woodworking, and drumming, as well as one-on-one mentoring.
- The annual Share Your Art Share Your Voice Art Showcase pivoted to a virtual production that was accessed by youth across the state and included a variety of performances and the well-loved gallery of art for sale.
- Employer Outreach Services expanded to serve all five DYS regions with two additional staff positions to develop a network of employer and training providers; strategic partnership is based on current labor market trends and youth interests. There are currently 31 employer partners, 13 of which engage in an Employer Advisory Committee designed to ensure strategies and programs adapt with the demands of the labor market.

- **DYS Workforce:** DYS current workforce numbers are as follows: as of today, our workforce is 817
 - 837.7 FTE employees
 - 589 (72.1%) male, 228 (27.9%) female; 408 (46.1%) minorities; 33 (4%) veterans
 - The average age of the DYS employee is 43
 - 76% of the DYS workforce is comprised of direct care staff (including those working in the residential programs and the District Offices).

To enhance recruitment and retention efforts, DYS partners with local colleges and universities to develop a strong candidate pool of qualified applicants for Juvenile Justice Youth Development Specialist (JJYDS) positions. DYS has shifted three (3) residential programs to alternative work schedules consisting of four, 10-hour work days with 3 consecutive days off to attract candidates and offer flexible work opportunities.

- **FY2021 Budget:** DYS FY21 budget is \$174.6M
 - \$112.4M: Residential services for committed population
 - \$27.9M: Services for detained residential population
 - \$24.3M: Services for committed non-residential population
 - \$4.5M: Administrative account
 - \$3.1M: Teacher salaries
 - \$2.4M: Overnight Arrest