



**Council of the District of Columbia
Committee on the Judiciary
Performance Oversight Hearing
Pre-Hearing Questions and Answers**



Agency Operations 2, 3

2. What are the agency's top five priorities? Please explain how the agency expects to address these priorities in FY16.

DYRS's priorities for the current year are driven by our FY16 Performance Plan and the agency's strategic plan. Below you'll find key initiatives that will help us achieve these goals.

- I. ***Invest in community-based programs, services, supports and opportunities that prepare youth to succeed highlighted by creating an innovative and comprehensive service delivery model.***

Refocus Case Management's Role during the Rehabilitation Process: *Over the past few years, Case Management did not primarily drive our young people's rehabilitation and corresponding treatment plan. DYRS is remedying this by inserting the Case Manager/Social Worker into the driver seat throughout the entire process. The agency is also simplifying a service delivery model that became convoluted over the past few years. This will increase staff accountability and, more importantly, staff buy-in during the young person's rehabilitation process.*

Launch the Credible Messenger Initiative: *The Credible Messenger Initiative is the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Service's most comprehensive attempt to invest in the human resources of the neighborhoods most impacted by youth delinquency and incarceration. Credible Messengers are community members who share similar lived experiences with the youth and families served by DYRS. They preach the message that life transformation is possible because they themselves have overcome similar challenges faced by youth and families. They are credible messengers to youth and families because they themselves have experienced the justice system, live in the same neighborhoods, and share similar ethnic and racial backgrounds as those they mentor. Credible Messengers serve in a variety of capacities to coach, guide, mentor, and advocate for youth and families in both group and individual settings.*

Core Program Elements

- ***Transformative Mentoring***
- ***Parent Peer Coaching Restorative Justice***
- ***Economic Opportunities***



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- ***Neighborhood-based Programming***

- *Model Enhancements*

The Credible Messenger Initiative will also include several key enhancements to advance DYRS's commitment to justice reinvestment through building community capacity. These enhancements include:

- ***Integrating Credible Messengers across DYRS***
- ***Credible Messenger Development***
- ***Evaluation***

Timeline for Implementation: We expect to begin serving youth and families by May 2016.

II. Continue implementing a robust staff development process that features intensive training in key areas including trauma, youth development, and family engagement.

DYRS is committed to the success of its staff and is proactively establishing more robust training and professional development opportunities for staff at all levels. During the past twelve months the agency has taken several steps to extend opportunities beyond mandatory compliance training, such as:

- *Expanding job-specific training opportunities to address staff positions that fall outside of the direct-care role, providing unprecedented access to outside trainings. Staff from Secure Programs, Youth and Family Programs, Health and Wellness Services, Food Services, Office of Internal Investigations, Operations, General Counsel, Administrative Services, Human Resources, and the Chief of Staff benefitted from attendance at job specific trainings and/or professional conferences.*
- *Continuing our robust pre-service/in-service training and refresher training programs for direct-care staff. The agency currently offers over 110 hours of pre-service/in-service training and over 38 hours of refresher training annually.*
- *Developing an internal cadre of leaders through the Leadership Academy, a partnership with George Washington University's Center for Excellence in Public Leadership that develops leadership competencies in program participants. This year's cohort of 19 participants were representative of the overall staff demographic in that 58% of participants were direct-care staff, 21% were from Youth and Family Programs, and 21% were from Administrative departments.*

In addition to the above initiatives, the Agency expanded its online training programs to allow more staff the opportunity for self-directed study. Of note is the Agency's recent deployment of Lynda.com, an online learning library that is used widely within the



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Federal Sector. The Agency is also working with SkillSoft to deploy its Leadership Advantage portal that will allow staff access to competency-based leadership training online.

- III. Operate secure facilities that are safe, humane, and address youth needs using a strengths-based approach highlighted by vacating the Jerry M. consent decree:** *The action steps the agency is taking to receive a finding of compliance from the Special Arbiter are:*

Staffing:

- *Recruit, hire and maintain required staffing complements of SYDRs and YDRs.*
- *Ensure that staff maintains posts deployment daily.*

Fire Safety:

- *Ensure that testing and maintenance work of DYRS's fire suppression systems is performed according to the requirements of the fire code.*

Medical and Behavioral Health:

- *Work with Special Arbiter's medical and behavioral health experts to address specific remaining deficiencies in the programs.*

Critical Incidents and Assaults:

- *Continue to perform quality checks of incident data.*
- *Continue to conduct incident trend data analyses to address reasons for incidents within the facilities.*

- IV. Decrease the use of Residential Placements:** *DYRS is committed to reducing the use residential placements with a focus on keeping our young people in their respective homes. The agency is taking steps such as - having a committee in place designed to review and approve any referrals to RTCs; providing specialized training to our current staff to offer treatments while our youth are at home; and focusing more on the family surrounding our young people.*

- V. Enhance the ability to collect and analyze data to inform the development of policy and practice.**

3. Please describe any action the agency has taken to address racial disproportionality in the District's juvenile justice system.



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While DYRS doesn't control who is committed to the agency, we are committed to assisting and analyzing the reasons behind the racial disproportionality in the District's juvenile justice system. To this end, we are currently working with the W Haywood Burns Institute, through a process coordinated by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC), to assess and collect data regarding racial disproportionality seen in the District's juvenile justice system.