

PATHWAY TO IMPACT



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE



Mission Statement

Enhance public safety through high-quality effective services for youth and families delivered by world-class professionals dedicated to building a stronger, safer Florida.

Impact Statement

Florida's juvenile justice system will continue to pursue comprehensive system improvement and deploy proven practices that solidify our place as the leading system in the nation.

Five Guiding Principles to Service Excellence

Dedication to the Success of Youth and Families

Provide exceptional customer service with dignity and respect at every encounter.

Develop a World-Class Team

Dedicated to promoting the professional and personal growth of each individual.

Excellence Through Leadership

Cultivate high-impact leaders, regardless of position, with an expectation of excellence and accountability in everything we do.

Data and Evidence Driven

Use of high-quality data to inform decisions and effective implementation of evidence-based practices.

Commitment to Results

Achieve extraordinary outcomes to strengthen youth, families, and communities.





INTRODUCTION BY SECRETARY ERIC HALL

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the nation's largest consolidated juvenile justice system, is a global leader in using data and evidence-based services with a focus on enhancing public safety and building a stronger, safer Florida. Through the department's strategic efforts, in coordination with service providers, law enforcement, and court system partners, Florida has realized historic outcomes that have no doubt strengthened our system, while providing high-impact, high-value opportunities for our youth and families. Some of the most impactful initiatives that have helped to drive our achievements are grounded in the effective deployment of high-quality preventative programming, while also ensuring the accurate assessment and delivery of rehabilitative services across our continuum of care with greater efficacy. Our research-informed approach coupled with the dedication of DJJ staff, providers, volunteers, and community partners has led to record accomplishments in system outcomes, with reductions in juvenile referrals, commitments to secure facilities, and recidivism rates.

While DJJ has been on the cutting edge of system transformation, our dedicated and ongoing intentional focus on using the most current research and data available has led the department to design and launch our next chapter of system innovation. In this next phase of system excellence, DJJ will double down on our efforts to achieve two primary objectives: prevent system contact for Florida youth and reduce recidivism for youth that have experienced engagement with the system. These two priorities will realize even greater results as DJJ deploys its pathway to impact, which is centered on four cornerstones to:

- Build a world-class talented team that ensures a culture of excellence across the system.
- Deploy data-informed decision-making across the service continuum.
- Ensure high-quality implementation of evidence-based practices systemwide.
- Accelerate academic achievement and post-secondary success for Florida's youth.

These cornerstones have emerged from an exhaustive review of the literature and research, as well as engagement with stakeholders to identify barriers to long-term success. From this analysis and collection of data, DJJ is committed to aligning its work and coordination of resources with a laser-focused vision that prevents system involvement, ensures youth are held accountable for their actions and behaviors, and delivers significant reductions in recidivism. This report highlights the achievements realized in Florida's system while outlining the path ahead as the four cornerstones reinforce our strong foundation and intentional efforts to drive deep and meaningful impact in the lives of youth and families across the free state of Florida.



THE FOUR CORNERSTONES TO SERVICE EXCELLENCE

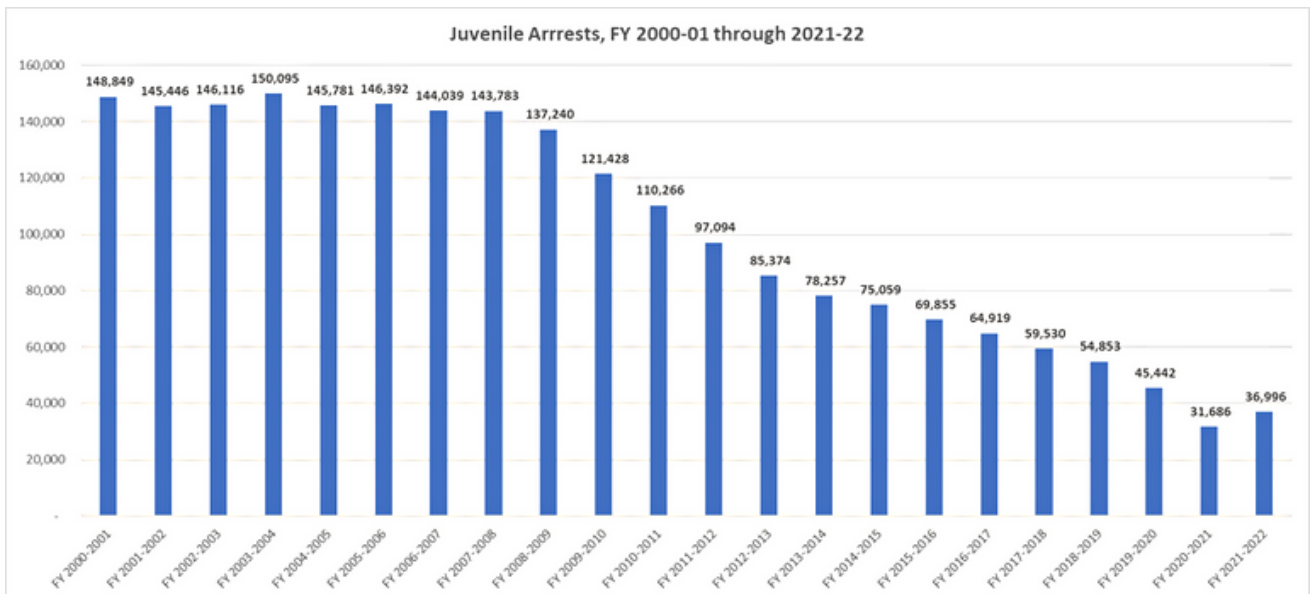


PREVENT SYSTEM CONTACT



Proactive Prevention. The optimal time to intervene in the lives of youth at risk is before any form of delinquent behavior occurs. DJJ offers voluntary prevention, intervention, and treatment service programs for youth throughout the state. These services are designed to address specific needs and provide interventions for at-risk youth and their families to prevent juvenile crime and protect public safety. Programs use the risk factors identified by research to target services for youth who exhibit problem behaviors, such as ungovernability, truancy, running away from home, and other pre-delinquent behaviors. A total of 25,826 youth were served through state and federally-funded prevention programs during FY 2020-21.

- Juvenile arrests decreased 75% between FY 2000-01 and FY 2021-22, from 148,849 to 36,996.¹



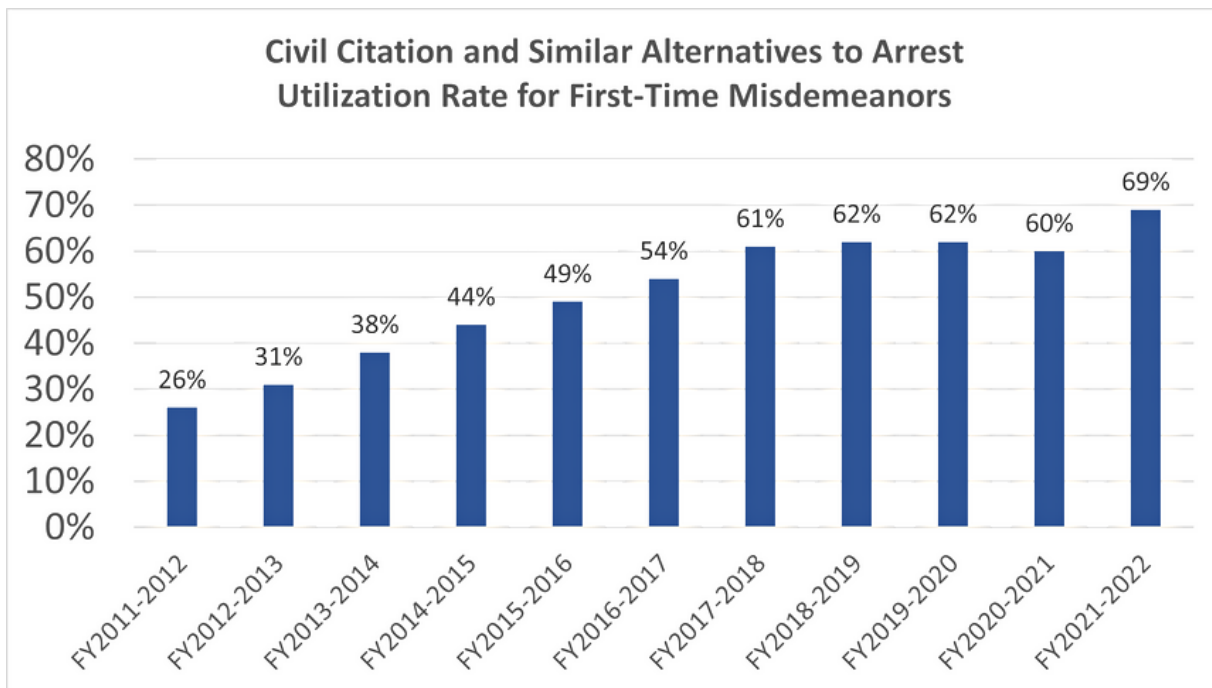
[1] Arrest rates in FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2021 were impacted by COVID-19.



Diverting First Time, Low-Level Offenders from the Juvenile Justice System. Over 11,000 first-time misdemeanor youth were successfully diverted from arrest during the twelve-month period of December 2021 through November 2022 through DJJ's civil citation initiative. Civil citation or similar prearrest diversion programs provide an alternative to arrest or formal processing for minor, misdemeanor delinquent acts while ensuring swift and appropriate consequences for youth. These programs provide immediate accountability for a youth's actions and behaviors and a varied array of services, including assessment, treatment, and oversight of sanctions, such as community service hours. These programs have proved to be highly successful at diverting low-risk youth from the juvenile justice system and connecting them with community-based treatments. Indeed, a recent analysis of DJJ's civil citation program indicated that juveniles who received a civil citation were 54% less likely to recidivate than their formally processed peers.²

- The utilization rate for civil citation-eligible youth has increased from 26% to 69% since Fiscal Year (FY) 2011-12, and 85% of first-time school-related misdemeanors resulted in a civil citation in FY 2021-22.
- The 12-month recidivism rate for civil citation completers during FY 2020-21 was a remarkably low 4%.

[2] Nadel, M. R., Bales, W., & Pesta, G. (2019). An assessment of the effectiveness of civil citation as an alternative to arrest among youth apprehended by law enforcement.



REDUCING RECIDIVISM FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE INVOLVED YOUTH

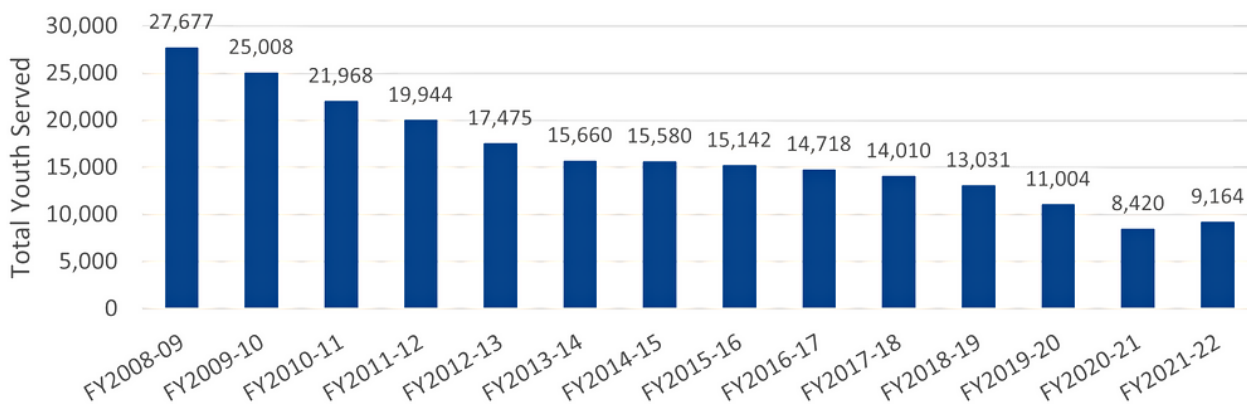
Prioritizing Least Restrictive Placement. While juvenile crime poses serious risks to Florida’s communities, juveniles are in a formative period of their lives, which impacts both their degree of responsibility and potential for reform. Overly intensive juvenile justice system involvement has been shown to interfere with normal social development by disrupting educational, employment, and social opportunities.³ Responses to delinquent behavior must therefore account for immediate and long-term improvements to public safety. Research consistently demonstrates that juveniles and their communities are best served by treatments featuring the least intrusive and restrictive environments that are consistent with public safety.⁴ Utilizing an evidence-based approach to assess a youth’s immediate risk to public safety and treatment needs through structured decision-making tools facilitates optimal placements that promote sustained long-term public safety.

- Since FY 2008-09, the number of youth served in secure detention declined 67%, from 27,677 to 9,164.

[3] Laub, J. H., Sampson, R. J., & Sweeten, G. A. (2017). Assessing Sampson and Laub's life-course theory of crime. In F. T. Cullen, J. P. Wright, & K. R. Blevins (Eds.), *Taking stock: The status of criminological theory* (Vol. 15, pp. 313-333). Routledge.; Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100(4), 674-701.; Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Harvard University Press.

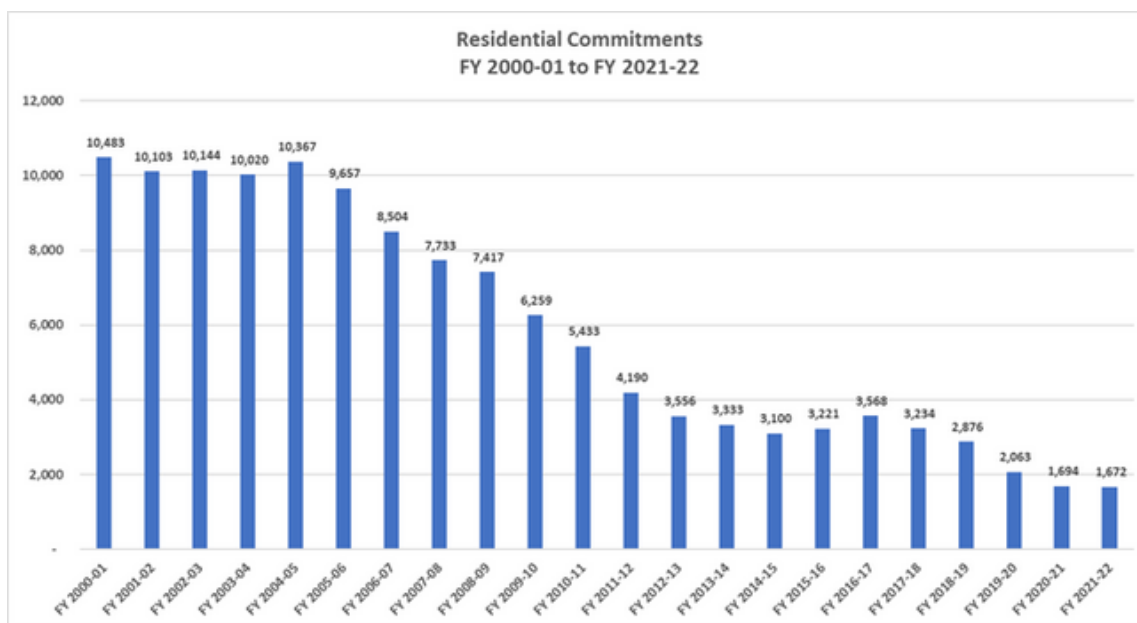
[4] Baglivio, M. T., Greenwald, M. A., & Russell, M. (2015). Assessing the implications of a structured decision-making tool for recidivism in a statewide analysis. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 14(1), 5-49. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12108>; Lehmann, P. S., Meldrum, R. C., & Greenwald, M. A. (2020). Upward departures from structured recommendations in juvenile court dispositions: The intersection of race, ethnicity, and gender. *Justice Quarterly*, 37(3), 514-540. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1531143>

Youth Served in Secure Detention FY 2008-09 to FY 2021-22



Source: FLDJJ Office of Research and Data Integrity, Comprehensive Accountability Reports

- The number of residential commitments dropped 84% between FY 2000-01 and FY 2020-21, from 10,483 to 1,672. Despite serving increasingly high-acuity youth in residential commitment, the recidivism rate for residential completers is at its lowest rate in the past decade, 37%.



Delivering High-Fidelity, Evidence-Based Treatment Tailored to Youth Needs. Nationally, the effectiveness of individual juvenile justice intervention treatment programs varies considerably.⁵ DJJ and its providers have adopted evidence-based treatments based on a specific treatment or program model that has been evaluated and shown to significantly reduce recidivism. To optimize the effectiveness of evidence-based interventions, it is critical to couple the use of evidence-based interventions with high-fidelity implementation.⁶

[5] Lipsey, M. W. (2008). *The Arizona Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) for assessing the effectiveness of programs for juvenile probationers: SPEP ratings and relative recidivism reduction for the initial SPEP sample*. V. I. f. P. P. Studies.

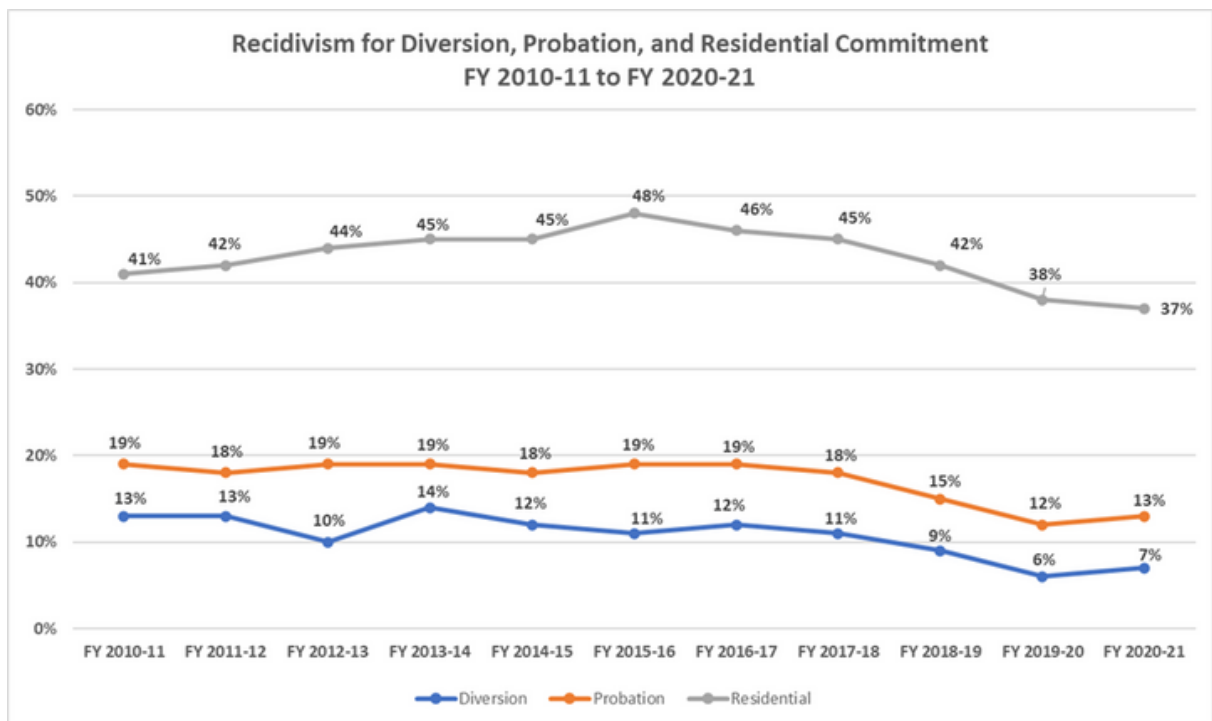
[6] Elliott, D. S., Buckley, P. R., Gottfredson, D. C., Hawkins, J. D., & Tolan, P. H. (2020). Evidence-based juvenile justice programs and practices: A critical review. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 19(4), 1305-1328. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12520>; Lipsey, M. W. (2009). The primary factors that characterize effective interventions with juvenile offenders: A meta-analytic overview. *Victims & Offenders*, 4(2), 124-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15564880802612573>

Celebrating and Sustaining Success



Poorly implemented evidence-based interventions and practices undermine their impact on youth outcomes. DJJ’s utilization of implementation science—the study of effective, sustained, and adaptive research into policies and practice—promotes treatment fidelity by developing system readiness, expanding system capacity, and continuing assessments of implementation progress.⁷ The criminogenic needs and protective factors of each individual are unique and ensuring rehabilitative services directly match each juvenile’s criminogenic needs is vital for effective treatment. Numerous studies demonstrate that directly matching youth services to youth needs yields substantial reductions in recidivism.⁸

- The recidivism rate has experienced steady declines for each of DJJ’s primary program types since the mid-2010s. In FY 2020-21, recidivism rates were at or near historic lows with 37%, 13%, and 7% recidivism rates for residential, probation, and diversion youth, respectively.



[7] Moir, T. (2018). Why is implementation science important for intervention design and evaluation within educational settings? *Frontiers in Education*, 3, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2018.00061>
 [8] Baglivio, M. T., Wolff, K. T., Howell, J. C., Jackowski, K., & Greenwald, M. A. (2018). The search for the holy grail: Criminogenic needs matching, intervention dosage, and subsequent recidivism among serious juvenile offenders in residential placement. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 55, 46-57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2018.02.001>; Luong, D., & Wormith, J. S. (2011). Applying risk/need assessment to probation practice and its impact on the recidivism of young offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 38(12), 1177-1199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854811421596>; Nelson, R. J., & Vincent, G. M. (2018). Matching services to criminogenic needs following comprehensive risk assessment implementation in juvenile probation. *Ibid.*, 45(8), 1136-1153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854818780923>; Peterson-Badali, M., Skilling, T., & Haqanee, Z. (2015). Examining implementation of risk assessment in case management for youth in the justice system. *Ibid.*, 42(3), 304-320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854814549595>; Vieira, T. A., Skilling, T. A., & Peterson-Badali, M. (2009). Matching court-ordered services with treatment needs: Predicting treatment success with young offenders. *Ibid.*, 36(4), 385-401. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854808331249>

CORNERSTONE ONE

Building a World-Class Talented Team That Ensures
A Culture of Excellence Across The System



Critical Role of Talent and Department Culture

Developing a talented and dedicated team is imperative to delivering high-quality, effective services and achieving DJJ's objectives. Indeed, progress for youth, family, and community outcomes goes beyond changes to facility design and service availability. The quality of interactions between youth, families, and staff is central to long-term youth success. It is critical to recognize the impact talent, leadership, and organizational culture have on the department's ability to ensure these high-quality interactions and the achievement of its goals as the department prepares to further advance its mission. DJJ will promote a renewed focus on talent and organizational culture development throughout its staff and among providers and provider staff.

Juvenile justice agencies across the country have documented high rates of turnover and staffing challenges.⁹ These can present challenges to effective implementation of services and erode service quality.¹⁰ The department will continue to build off of historic investments in raising compensation for its frontline staff and will maintain its commitment to recruitment, development, and retention which will not only seek to improve the quality of youth programming but also enhance job satisfaction for all DJJ and provider staff. Statewide recruitment efforts will highlight DJJ's vital mission and opportunities for personal and professional growth afforded in the department. Central to this focus, DJJ will expand talent development opportunities by improving academy and in-service trainings, undergoing an accreditation process, and promoting advanced employee certifications. Further, efforts to promote employment flexibility and compensation will ensure the retention of talented staff with an expansive institutional knowledge.

[9] Mikytuck, A. M., & Cleary, H. M. D. (2016). Factors associated with turnover decision making among juvenile justice employees: Comparing correctional and non-correctional staff. *Journal of Juvenile Justice*, 5(2), 50-67.

[10] Ford, J. D., & Blaustein, M. E. (2013). Systemic self-regulation: A framework for trauma-informed services in residential juvenile justice programs. *Journal of Family Violence*, 28(7), 665-677.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-013-9538-5>; Wolff, K. T., Limoncelli, K. E., & Baglivio, M. T. (2022). The effect of program staffing difficulties on changes in dynamic risk and reoffending among juvenile offenders in residential placement. *Justice Quarterly*, 39(3), 525-552. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2020.1825774>

An organizational culture promoting a passionate, data-driven, and intentional approach to juvenile justice service delivery will underpin these talent recruitment, development, and retention efforts. To this point, DJJ will promote and integrate the following five guiding principles into its operational DNA for both the department and provider partners:

- **Dedication to the Success of Youth and Families** – Provide exceptional customer service with dignity and respect at every encounter.
- **Develop a World-Class Team** – Dedicated to promoting the professional and personal growth of each individual.
- **Excellence Through Leadership** – Cultivate high-impact leaders, regardless of position, with an expectation of excellence and accountability in everything we do.
- **Data and Evidence Driven** – Use of high-quality data to inform decisions and effective implementation of evidence-based practices.
- **Commitment to Results** – Achieve extraordinary outcomes to strengthen youth, families, and communities.

Office of Talent, Leadership, and Culture

DJJ launched the Office of Talent, Leadership, and Culture (TLC) to institutionalize these department priorities and develop training avenues that embed the values and culture of the department throughout the training continuum. The ever-changing nature of juvenile justice and the need to facilitate the best prevention and intervention strategies for youth and families demands the availability of ever-growing high-quality/high-impact talent and leadership. To meet this demand, the department is strengthening its commitment to develop and maintain a world-class team of both state and provider professionals who are dedicated to building stronger, safer communities. TLC's mission is to ensure our team members (both state and provider) know the department is equally committed to the growth and development of its members as we are to the youth, families, and communities we serve.

The TLC will accomplish its goal in the following ways:

- Reshape department hiring processes to evaluate expected competencies to ensure each new team member aligns with the organizational culture and values.
- Use of basic training certification curricula with a focus on the core values and guiding principles of the department.
- Accreditation of the certification processes to allow for the receipt and articulation of college credits at the completion of the course.
- Foster an environment of coaching, mentoring, strength building, and servant leadership.
- Create and launch a research-informed DJJ leadership academy for current and emerging leaders.

CORNERSTONE TWO

Deploy Data-Informed Decision-Making Across the Service Continuum

Institutionalize Data-Informed Decision-Making

Juvenile justice agencies routinely examine data when making strategic and programmatic decisions. Research on criminal justice, education, and other human service organizations demonstrate there is considerable variation in the quality and role of data in the decision-making process.¹¹

DJJ is recognized as a national leader committed to using high-quality data to guide department initiatives and improve youth outcomes.



This resulted from investing considerable resources to expand its data collection and reporting capacity, and its capacity to conduct high-level analyses through in-house and contracted research in an effort to provide actionable information to key decision-makers.¹²

As DJJ seeks to improve its services, there are opportunities to improve the process for using data. To this end, DJJ is committed to institutionalize data-informed decision-making throughout its services. This framework recognizes the potential of data to optimize service but suggests the nature of its use is equally consequential.¹³ Data-informed decision-making entails the use of data to:

- Monitor delinquency and system trends to identify emerging problems and opportunities.
- Incorporate data in the strategic planning and implementation of programming.
- Engage in a continuous feedback process to ensure programming is achieving the intended impact.

To this end, DJJ and its community partners will collect, interpret, and utilize data systematically and continuously to better impact youth and community outcomes.

[11] Murray, J. (2013). Critical issues facing school leaders concerning data-informed decision-making. *School Leadership & Management*, 33(2), 169-177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2013.773882>; Nutley, T., & Reynolds, H. W. (2013). Improving the use of health data for health system strengthening. *Global Health Action*, 6(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.3402/gha.v6i0.20001>; Walker, S. C., Bumbarger, B. K., & Phillippi, S. W. (2015). Achieving successful evidence-based practice implementation in juvenile justice: The importance of diagnostic and evaluative capacity. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 52, 189-197. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2015.05.001>

[12] Hay, C., Ladwig, S., & Campion, B. (2018). Tracing the rise of evidence-based juvenile justice in Florida. *Victims & Offenders*, 13(3), 312-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2017.1289995>

[13] Means, B., Padilla, C., DeBarger, A., & Bakia, M. (2009). *Implementing data-informed decision making in schools: Teacher access, supports and use*.

Office of System Innovation

The Office of System Innovation (OSI) was created in 2022 to chart the course for system-wide excellence and to help institutionalize data-informed decision-making throughout the juvenile justice system. Consistent with these objectives, OSI facilitates the identification, collection, and interpretation of cross-system data to identify and respond to delinquency and juvenile justice performance trends. DJJ and its partner organizations have embraced the potential value of data and routinely collect data for operational and administrative use. However, it is necessary to determine which data are readily available, reliable, and representative of key performance metrics.¹⁴ Data will quantify current trends and be used to evaluate the impact of policy and practice responses. Many key data will be collected using DJJ's existing systems; for all other data sources, OSI will cooperate with DJJ service areas and partner organizations to ensure critical decisions are informed by the most appropriate and insightful data.

While quality data is requisite, it is not sufficient to instill data-informed decision-making alone. OSI will be integral to enabling the successful implementation of this process through staff development and creating necessary infrastructure. OSI, in coordination with the Office of Talent, Leadership and Culture, will oversee trainings and support for DJJ, provider, and partner organization leadership on data-informed decision-making and its role in Florida's juvenile justice system. Within DJJ, this includes interaction with executive and service area leadership in addition to circuit (e.g., chief and assistant chief probation officers) and detention facility (e.g., superintendents and assistant superintendents) leadership. DJJ represents just one organization in an expansive juvenile justice system. Therefore, OSI's efforts to promote this process will integrate provider, Circuit Advisory Board (CAB), and State Advisory Group (SAG) leaders. In addition to initial training, OSI will provide ongoing coaching and technical assistance to ensure these key decision-makers have continuous support.

To enable adherence to data-informed decision-making, OSI will establish and oversee formal mechanisms for decision-making and accountability. This includes establishing formal standards for evaluating juvenile justice data and, as will be discussed in cornerstone three, implementing evidence-based practices with high fidelity. Monthly Data-Comm meetings for executive and service area leadership will allow OSI to oversee the discussion of trends, data-informed responses, and the impact of initiatives. Further, OSI will regularly review the use of structured implementation resources and practice profiles to enhance fidelity and effective implementation of processes systemwide. Ultimately, these accountability measures will be monitored by OSI to gauge progress in data-informed decision-making and guide coaching and technical assistance efforts.

[14] Behn, R. D. (2008). Designing Performancestat: Or what are the key strategic choices that a jurisdiction or agency must make when adapting the CompStat/CitiStat class of performance strategies? *Public Performance & Management Review*, 32(2), 206-235. <https://doi.org/10.2753/PMR1530-9576320202>

Early Risk Identification and Prevention

DJJ's elevated focus on the value of prevention is emblematic of data-informed decision-making. The optimal time to intervene in the lives of youth at risk is before any form of delinquent behavior occurs. Historically, DJJ's prevention services have been responsive in nature; juveniles voluntarily participate in programs after they join a program themselves or are referred to a program at the prompting of family, school employees, or community members. While there are proactive efforts to publicize prevention services, referrals typically initiate from an external source. A renewed focus on early identification and a proactive approach to deploying interventions can better enable prevention services to combat delinquency before its onset.

While prevention is the ideal method to address juvenile delinquency, accurately identifying at-risk youth prior to juvenile justice involvement is challenging. Decades of criminological research has identified a host of risk factors that can influence youth engagement in delinquent behavior prior to its onset.¹⁵ However, knowledge of these factors provides minimal practical value without the ability to capture them in a systematic and comprehensive manner. Development and monitoring of pre-delinquency indicators enable DJJ and its partners to channel supportive resources to those with pre-delinquency indicators such as low academic achievement, school disengagement, family disruption, etc. Further, they will provide benchmarks for the evaluation of interventions to help ensure youth are held accountable for their actions and behaviors.

The following are examples of the data sources and procedures that may be utilized to prioritize the deployment of these preventive resources:

- Services to youth residing in the same household as currently served juvenile justice-involved youth.¹⁶
- School-based resources through regular reviews of school truancy data, school disciplinary data, and school-based civil citations and arrests.¹⁷
- Family support services for families involved with other social service agencies through regular collaboration with the Florida Department of Children and Families, Florida Department of Corrections, Florida Department of Education (FDOE), and the Florida Department of Health.¹⁸

[15] Farrington, D. P., Gaffney, H., & Tlofi, M. M. (2017). Systematic reviews of explanatory risk factors for violence, offending, and delinquency. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 33, 24-36. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2016.11.004>

[16] Farrington, D. P., Jolliffe, D., Loeber, R., Stouthamer-Loeber, M., & Kalb, L. M. (2001). The concentration of offenders in families, and family criminality in the prediction of boys' delinquency. *Journal of Adolescence*, 24(5), 579-596. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.2001.0424>

[17] Freidenfelt Liljeberg, J., Eklund, J. M., Fritz, M. V., & af Klinteberg, B. (2011). Poor school bonding and delinquency over time: Bidirectional effects and sex differences. *Ibid.*, 34(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.03.008>; Hirschi, P. J. (2018). Schools and crime. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 1(1), 149-169. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-032317-092358>; Hirschi, P. J., & Gasper, J. (2011). The relationship between school engagement and delinquency in late childhood and early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(1), 3-22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-010-9579-5>

[18] Farrington, D. P. (2010). Family influences on delinquency. In D. W. Springer & A. R. Roberts (Eds.), *Juvenile justice and delinquency* (pp. 203-222). Jones and Barlett Publishers.; Lee, S.-Y., & Villagrana, M. (2015). Differences in risk and protective factors between crossover and non-crossover youth in juvenile justice. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 58, 18-27. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.09.001>; Rocque, M., Jennings, W. G., Piquero, A. R., Ozkan, T., & Farrington, D. P. (2017). The importance of school attendance: findings from the Cambridge study in delinquent development on the life-course effects of truancy. *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(5), 592-612. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128716660520>; Widom, C. S., & Wilson, H. W. (2015). Intergenerational transmission of violence. In J. Lindert & I. Levav (Eds.), *Violence and mental health: Its manifold faces* (pp. 27-45). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8999-8_2

Through coordinated partnerships, DJJ and its partner agencies may direct voluntary, evidence-based prevention services with the goal of improving youth success in school and the community, while reducing the risk of contact with the juvenile system. A proactive approach to prevention necessitates intensive data collection, analysis, and ongoing collaboration with partner agencies. Data coordination and streamlined processes will improve interagency collaboration and communication. This will ensure that decisions are informed by comprehensive, timely data that has been prepared and interpreted by experts.

OSI will establish several objectives to ensure the effective utilization of data-informed decision-making across the agency, which may include and are not limited to:

- Establish program area (prevention, probation, detention, residential, etc.) data elements that are used to drive and monitor performance for improved and accelerated outcomes.
- Deploy monthly structured Data Comm meetings with each program area, where measures are reviewed and assessed to ensure the attainment of agreed-upon goals and targets.
- Design and launch system-wide processes that engage the State Advisory Group and the local Circuit Advisory Boards in the review and progress monitoring of state and local data elements for each program area.

CORNERSTONE THREE

Ensure High-Quality Implementation
of Evidence-Based Practices Systemwide



Expand the Use of Evidence-Based Practices

There is an abundance of practice models with distinct strategies, target populations, and protocols within juvenile justice systems across the nation. However, prior research consistently demonstrates that the effectiveness of these varied juvenile justice practices is not consistent.¹⁹ DJJ strives to prioritize evidence-based practices that have been shown—through rigorous evaluations—to reduce recidivism when implemented with fidelity. DJJ has enjoyed considerable improvements in treatment efficiency and reductions in recidivism by implementing practices with empirical backing or that incorporate elements with demonstrated effectiveness.

[19] Lipsey, M. W. (2008). *The Arizona Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) for assessing the effectiveness of programs for juvenile probationers: SPEP ratings and relative recidivism reduction for the initial SPEP sample*. V. I. f. P. P. Studies.

The promotion of evidence-based practice extends to all functions of the department and its services. DJJ's development and continued promotion of civil citation and diversion programs for low-risk youth are informed by research showing their effectiveness.²⁰ For youth requiring more intensive interventions, validated risk assessments and structured decision-making tools inform practitioners and ensure youth receive the optimal treatment. For example, evidence-based and validated tools have been integrated into critical junctures in the juvenile justice process such as predisposition detention and disposition recommendations.²¹ This prioritization of evidence-based practices also encompasses interventions delivered to youth in the community- and facility-based treatment environments. Most interventions throughout the service continuum meet one of DJJ's three rigorous standards: **evidence-based** (evaluated with the highest level of scientific rigor and shown to reduce reoffending), **promising** (evaluated with high scientific rigor and shown to reduce at least one risk factor for reoffending), or **practices with demonstrated effectiveness** (incorporate strategies or modalities demonstrated to be effective).²² This includes the utilization of cognitive-behavioral curriculums and community-based therapies and treatments—e.g., Functional Family Therapy, and Cognitive Behavioral Theory—that have been proven through research to reduce recidivism and/or criminogenic needs when delivered with fidelity and by qualified professionals.²³

These practices and treatment interventions have enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of DJJ services; however, there is still a pressing need to expand the availability of and promote the use of evidence-based practices throughout DJJ's service continuum. This approach will apply to all critical functions of the department, from the implementation of new department initiatives and staff training curricula to the interventions provided to youth. Going forward, DJJ will redouble its efforts to ensure that policies and practices are informed by the available research and conform to the gold standards in juvenile justice. The standards of treatment requirements for prevention, probation, and residential program providers will be elevated to promote the use of evidence-based practice. When presented with novel challenges, the department will respond with strategies or modalities that demonstrate promise and modify practices based on rigorous, continuous evaluations.

[20] Mears, D. P., Kuch, J. J., Lindsey, A. M., Siennick, S. E., Pesta, G. B., Greenwald, M. A., & Blomberg, T. G. (2016). Juvenile court and contemporary diversion: Helpful, harmful, or both? *Criminology & Public Policy*, 15(3), 953-981.; Nadel, M. R., Bales, W., & Pesta, G. (2019). *An assessment of the effectiveness of civil citation as an alternative to arrest among youth apprehended by law enforcement*; Ray, J. V., & Childs, K. (2015). Juvenile diversion. In M. D. Krohn & J. Lane (Eds.), *The handbook of juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice* (pp. 422-438). Wiley-Blackwell.; Wilson, H. A., & Hoge, R. D. (2013). Diverting our attention to what works: Evaluating the effectiveness of a youth diversion program. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*, 11(4), 313-331. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1541204012473132>

[21] Baglivio, M. T. (2009). The assessment of risk to recidivate among a juvenile offending population. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 37(6), 596-607. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2009.09.008>; Baglivio, M. T., Greenwald, M. A., & Russell, M. (2015). Assessing the implications of a structured decision-making tool for recidivism in a statewide analysis. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 14(1), 5-49. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12108>; Early, K. W. (2018). *Florida detention risk assessment instrument: 2018 validation and revision analysis report*; Schwarz, I. M., York, P., Greenwald, M., Ramos-Hernandez, A., & Feeley, L. (2016). Using predictive analytics and machine learning to improve the accuracy and performance of juvenile justice risk assessment instruments: The Florida Case Study. In F. Taxman (Ed.), *Handbook on Risk and Need Assessment* (pp. 156-179). Routledge.; Sheppard, K. G. (2022). *Detention Risk Assessment Instrument Evaluation*.

[22] Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. (2022). *Research Informed and Best Practices*. Florida Department of Juvenile Justice., <https://www.djj.state.fl.us/partners-providers-staff/programming-and-technical-assistance-unit/research-informed-and-best-practices>

[23] Botvin, G. J., & Griffin, K. W. (2004). Life Skills Training: Empirical findings and future directions. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 25(2), 211-232. <https://doi.org/10.1023/B:JOPP.0000042391.58573.5b>; Hartnett, D., Carr, A., Hamilton, E., & O'Reilly, G. (2017). The effectiveness of Functional Family Therapy for adolescent behavioral and substance misuse problems: A meta-analysis. *Family Process*, 56(3), 607-619. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12256>; Hofmann, S. G., Asnaani, A., Vonk, I. J. J., Sawyer, A. T., & Fang, A. (2012). The efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy: A review of meta-analyses. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 36(5), 427-440. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10608-012-9476-1>



Tailor Services to Youth Needs

DJJ and its providers administer a wide array of services that address a diverse set of criminological needs.²⁴ Prior research has consistently demonstrated that matching program services to juveniles' most pressing criminogenic needs can optimize youth outcomes.²⁵ For example, prior research of Florida juveniles in residential settings demonstrates that tailoring high-fidelity treatments to youth needs reduces recidivism by as much as 40%.²⁶

DJJ is committed to this individualized approach to rehabilitation throughout its service continuum. For community-based treatments, DJJ will conduct regular reviews of prevention and probation programs to identify geographic gaps in coverage and asset mapping exercises intended to determine existing educational programming in communities. In communities without evidence-based services, DJJ will seek to develop and deploy new programs through requests for proposals and similar procurement methods. This includes a particular emphasis on expanding specialized services (e.g., extended learning/tutoring, mental health services, truancy reduction, school support services) with a demonstrated need in particular communities. This will expand the number of programs cataloged in DJJ's Community Resource Guide Dashboard, which provides an overview of available programs for at-risk and juvenile justice-involved youth that is sortable by program type and age of youth.²⁷

[24] Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. (2022). *Research Informed and Best Practices*. Florida Department of Juvenile Justice., <https://www.djj.state.fl.us/partners-providers-staff/programming-and-technical-assistance-unit/research-informed-and-best-practices>

[25] Baglivio, M. T., Wolff, K. T., Howell, J. C., Jackowski, K., & Greenwald, M. A. (2018). The search for the holy grail: Criminogenic needs matching, intervention dosage, and subsequent recidivism among serious juvenile offenders in residential placement. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 55, 46-57. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2018.02.001>; Luong, D., & Wormith, J. S. (2011). Applying risk/need assessment to probation practice and its impact on the recidivism of young offenders. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 39(12), 1177-1199. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854811421596>; Nelson, R. J., & Vincent, G. M. (2018). Matching services to criminogenic needs following comprehensive risk assessment implementation in juvenile probation. *Ibid.*, 45(8), 1136-1153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854818780923>; Peterson-Badali, M., Skilling, T., & Haqanee, Z. (2015). Examining implementation of risk assessment in case management for youth in the justice system. *Ibid.*, 42(3), 304-320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854814549595>; Vieira, T. A., Skilling, T. A., & Peterson-Badali, M. (2009). Matching court-ordered services with treatment needs: Predicting treatment success with young offenders. *Ibid.*, 36(4), 385-401. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854808331249>

[26] Baglivio, M. T., Wolff, K. T., Howell, J. C., Jackowski, K., & Greenwald, M. A. (2018). The search for the holy grail: Criminogenic needs matching, intervention dosage, and subsequent recidivism among serious juvenile offenders in residential placement. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 55, 46-57. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2018.02.001>

[27] Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. (2021). *Community Resource Guide*. <https://www.djj.state.fl.us/partners-providers-staff/policies-resources/community-resource-guide>

Addressing the service needs of youth in residential commitment programs is of critical importance, given the duration of treatment and the special needs of the population. Once a court disposes a youth to residential commitment, commitment staffing meetings—conducted by a multi-disciplinary team—ensure youth are assigned to programs that can best address their needs. DJJ will continue to actively monitor youth needs to ensure that the composition of commitment programs is prepared to meet those needs. Both short-term operational adjustments and long-term responsiveness can ensure that youth needs continue to be optimally addressed. Commitment staffing meetings continue to utilize needs assessment tools to ensure assignment to programs is driven by a data-informed process. Augmentation of available data will further improve DJJ's ability to place youth in their optimal program. As will be discussed, a particular emphasis will be placed on matching youth with effective and relevant educational services. Diversification and specialization of educational programs in residential programs will better enable youth to experience transformative progress in the areas of education and career and technical education (CTE). DJJ will build upon its individualized approach to youth treatment through a renewed emphasis on residential program specialization. Current contracts specify the types of services (e.g., substance abuse overlay, intensive mental health, sex offender, etc.) provided to admitted youth. By evaluating the evolving needs of the residential population, DJJ can ensure program capacity reflects emerging patterns in youth needs.

Promote High-Fidelity Implementation

The use of evidence-based practices alone is not sufficient to impact the outcomes of youth. Prior studies consistently indicate that evidence-based practices often fail to meaningfully impact youth outcomes when not properly implemented.²⁸ Instead, coupling effective practices with high-fidelity implementation is critical to optimize programming.²⁹ The fields of public health, mental health, and education have all benefited from embracing best practices and implementing them in a systemic, research-informed manner. Many of the advancements in these fields have been propelled by adherence to a systematic framework for implementing interventions, an approach termed implementation science.

The implementation science framework provides a structured process for achieving the desired impact of evidence-based practice across multiple contexts³⁰ It begins with instilling organizational readiness by assessing current organizational capabilities (e.g., motivational readiness, resources, staff attributes, and organizational climate) with respect to the demands of evidence-based practice. This ensures that organizations—both DJJ and its community partners—are sufficiently prepared to enact the requisite changes. Next, strategic planning will assess the implementation drivers that can influence the success of implementation. Enhancing the capacity of staff, creating supportive and well-resourced environments, and providing effective and adaptive leadership are critical aspects of strategic planning. These represent the competency drivers that will prepare DJJ and its partner organizations for the high-fidelity implementation of evidence-based practices. Accounting for the needs and capability of the implementation context enables the appropriate adoption of these practices by proactively and systematically addressing barriers.

[28] Bauer, M. S., Damschroder, L., Hagedorn, H., Smith, J., & Kilbourne, A. M. (2015). An introduction to implementation science for the non-specialist. *BMC Psychology*, 3(32), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-015-0089-9>

[29] Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. M., & Wallace, F. (2011). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature*. University of South Florida; 2005. *Tampa, No. Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Publication*, 231.; Nilsen, P., & Bernhardsson, S. (2019). Context matters in implementation science: A scoping review of determinant frameworks that describe contextual determinants for implementation outcomes. *BMC Health Services Research*, 19(1), 189. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-019-4015-3>

[30] Blase, K. A., Van Dyke, M., Fixen, D. L., & Bailey, F. W. (2012). Key concepts, themes, and evidence for practitioners in educational psychology. In B. Kelly & D. F. Perkins (Eds.), *Handbook of implementation science for psychology in education* (pp. 13-36). Cambridge University Press.

Once implemented, DJJ will engage in ongoing monitoring of practices to ensure that the intended effects are achieved. Facilitated by the OSI, DJJ leadership, chief probation officers, CAB leadership, and program providers will be encouraged to conduct routine outcome assessments. This will include the use of a continuous improvement model that relies upon an incremental and responsive process of implementation. The model encourages strategic planning, data analysis, and actions to fine-tune implementation. Practices and their implementation will be adjusted when outcome data indicate that they fall short of the intended effect. Developing data capacity, training staff in data-informed decision-making, and promoting the timely sharing of information are all necessary components of the feedback process. This includes:

- Expansion of data-sharing agreements with partner agencies.
- Enhanced accessibility and interpretability of department data.
- Augmentation and prioritization of practice evaluation tools such as implementation practice profiles, the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP), Office of Health Services treatment quality monitoring, and fiscal and programmatic accountability assessments conducted by Monitoring and Quality Improvement.

CORNERSTONE FOUR

Accelerate Academic Achievement and Post-secondary Success for Florida's Youth



The Transformative Impact of Education and Post-Secondary Credential Attainment on Youth Outcomes

DJJ can dramatically improve youth outcomes by providing improved educational and career opportunities for students. These services must be at the forefront of future system innovation. DJJ must act with urgency by emphasizing these service areas in recognition of the inextricable link between education, career development, and delinquency.³¹ Commitment to advance the educational and post-secondary opportunities of Florida's youth will permeate all facets of DJJ's continuum of services.

[31] Blomberg, T. G., & Pesta, G. B. (2017). Education and delinquency. In C. J. Schreck, M. J. Leiber, H. V. Miller, & K. Welch (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Juvenile Delinquency and Justice* (pp. 1-5). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118524275.ejdg0044>; Katsiyannis, A., Ryan, J. B., Zhang, D., & Spann, A. (2008). Juvenile delinquency and recidivism: The impact of academic achievement. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 24(2), 177-196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560701808460>; Lochner, L., & Moretti, E. (2004). The effect of education on crime: Evidence from prison inmates, arrests, and self-reports. *American Economic Review*, 94(1), 155-189. <https://doi.org/10.1257/000282804322970751>

Educational achievement and the socialization processes occurring in school settings play a critical role in the cognitive, psychological, and social development of adolescents.³² Success during these formative processes instills youth with the ability to be thoughtful, fulfilled, and productive members of the community while also facilitating future participation in an increasingly demanding labor market. For many youth, impediments to educational progress and engagement in juvenile delinquency have a common underlying factor. Indeed, many of the same risk factors for juvenile delinquency (e.g., anti-social peers, mental health, substance use, etc.) also threaten educational engagement and achievement.³³ Further, educational challenges and juvenile delinquency share a bidirectional relationship, as both directly and indirectly influence each other.³⁴ Unsurprisingly, formal juvenile-justice involvement is often preceded by problems in the school setting—disengagement, truancy, and suspensions—and participation in delinquency can derail academic progression and long-term achievement.

Promote Prevention through Access to High-Quality Education

A proactive approach to targeting educational and post-secondary challenges that promote juvenile delinquency prevention and reduction is ideal. Treating the underlying causes before they manifest or necessitate deep-end juvenile-justice involvement is highly beneficial for youth outcomes and community resources.³⁵ DJJ's prevention services operate with this same philosophy and attempt to increase public safety through effective prevention, intervention, and treatment services before youth have formal contact with the juvenile justice system. Family members, school employees, law enforcement, and community members seeking to address a youth's problematic, pre-delinquent behaviors can be referred to programs across the state. School performance and educational achievement are among the most important protective factors in preventing delinquency, and juvenile justice involvement is frequently preceded by problematic behavior in school settings such as truancy and academic underachievement.³⁶



“We know that individuals with ambition and opportunity can achieve the ‘American Dream,’ and providing Florida’s students served in the juvenile justice system with enhanced educational opportunities is unquestionably the best public safety strategy for Florida. We’re providing our students with the education and skills they need to be successful in their careers as they begin the new chapter of their lives in becoming great citizens.”

-DJJ Secretary Eric Hall

[32] Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2011). Promoting social and emotional development is an essential part of students' education. *Human Development*, 54(1), 1-3. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26764985>; Peng, P., & Kievit, R. A. (2020). The development of academic achievement and cognitive abilities: A bidirectional perspective. *Child Development Perspectives*, 14(1), 15-20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12352>

[33] Battin-Pearson, S., Newcomb, M. D., Abbott, R. D., Hill, K. G., Catalano, R. F., & Hawkins, J. D. (2000). Predictors of early high school dropout: A test of five theories. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 92(3), 568-582.; Porche, M. V., Fortuna, L. R., Lin, J., & Alegria, M. (2011). Childhood trauma and psychiatric disorders as correlates of school dropout in a national sample of young adults. *Child Development*, 82(3), 982-998. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01534.x>

[34] Freidenfeldt Liljeberg, J., Eklund, J. M., Fritz, M. V., & af Klinteberg, B. (2011). Poor school bonding and delinquency over time: Bidirectional effects and sex differences. *Journal of Adolescence*, 34(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2010.03.008>; Hirschfield, P. J., & Gasper, J. (2011). The relationship between school engagement and delinquency in late childhood and early adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40(1), 3-22. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-010-9579-5>

[35] Farrington, D. P. (2012). Should the juvenile justice system be involved in early intervention. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 11(2), 265-273.

[36] Blomberg, T. G., & Pesta, G. B. (2017). Education and delinquency. In C. J. Schreck, M. J. Leiber, H. V. Miller, & K. Welch (Eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Juvenile Delinquency and Justice* (pp. 1-5). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118524275.ejdj0044>; Katsiyannis, A., Ryan, J. B., Zhang, D., & Spann, A. (2008). Juvenile delinquency and recidivism: The impact of academic achievement. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 24(2), 177-196. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573560701808460>; Lochner, L., & Moretti, E. (2004). The effect of education on crime: Evidence from prison inmates, arrests, and self-reports. *American Economic Review*, 94(1), 155-189. <https://doi.org/10.1257/000282804322970751>

DJJ prevention efforts will seek to impact educational outcomes for youth, schools, and communities with a demonstrated need. In a process outlined in the data-informed decision-making section, DJJ will collaborate with partner organizations, such as FDOE, to analyze school and educational data trends. Supporting evidence-based school- and community-based educational practices in partnership with schools will be a key prevention strategy for the department. Among youth that are actively involved in DJJ's array of prevention services, proactive educational referrals for services will be encouraged for youth with a demonstrated need for educational assistance, as identified by the Prevention Assessment Tool (PAT). Further, DJJ's collaboration with Children In Need of Services/Families In Need of Services enables pre-delinquent youth access to a host of educational and social services administered through case management.

Close Educational and Credentialing Gaps among Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth

The emphasis on providing educational and post-secondary services will extend to youth involved in the juvenile justice system. For youth in community-based settings, referrals for youth to educational or post-secondary services will be encouraged with a demonstrated need for educational assistance, as identified by consultation with the youth, family, and most recent educational records, as well as responses on the Community Assessment Tool (CAT). To bolster academic and post-secondary success, JPOs will be provided additional training for communicating the importance of school success and post-secondary opportunities to youth and families. By these means, DJJ seeks to improve youth accessibility to community-based services that address these criminogenic needs.

While the majority of youth are served in the community, circumstances occasionally require youth to be placed in DJJ facilities. Year-round education classes are required for all Florida youth without a high school diploma or equivalent while in detention, residential commitment programs, and community-based programs such as facility-based day treatment and prevention programs that provide educational services. FDOE serves as the lead agency for juvenile justice education programs, curriculum, support services, and resources. DJJ is especially focused on improving services for youth in residential commitment programs. Serving this population is especially difficult, as youth committed to residential programs have a pronounced risk of poor academic performance both during and after their commitment. Indeed, a majority of these youth fail to return to a traditional school setting and do not achieve a standard high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma during or after their commitment.³⁷

A myriad of factors contributes to the academic challenges of youth in residential commitment programs. Prior research demonstrates these populations have high rates of emotional and behavioral disorders, learning disabilities, and other characteristics that complicate success in

[37] Blomberg, T. G., Bales, W. D., Mann, K., Piquero, A. R., & Berk, R. A. (2011). Incarceration, education and transition from delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 39(4), 355-365. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2011.04.003>; Cavendish, W. (2014). Academic attainment during commitment and postrelease education-related outcomes of juvenile justice-involved youth with and without disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 22(1), 41-52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426612470516>; Suits, S., Dunn, K., & Sabree, N. (2014). *Just learning: The imperative to transform juvenile justice systems into effective educational systems. A study of juvenile justice schools in the south and the nation.*

traditional classroom settings.³⁸ Further, the high rate of staff turnover in residential programs disrupt individual progression and classroom continuity. While the quality of educational services in residential programs in Florida has improved over time,³⁹ national research consistently demonstrates that educational services are substandard compared to those provided to community-based youth due to the challenges of this population and the nature of this educational setting.⁴⁰



Despite these noted challenges, educational, post-secondary, and CTE progress made in programs can be transformative for delinquent youth when delivered in alignment with research and evidence-based strategies. Research in the development/life-course literature has consistently demonstrated how significant life events related to educational attainment and employment can facilitate a transition away from delinquency.⁴¹ Juveniles experiencing educational and CTE achievements—degree attainment, earned academic credits, promotion status, attitudes towards education, etc.—in residential commitment settings exhibit lower recidivism rates and experience educational success following their commitment.⁴² A recent (Hay, Stults, Copp, Young, & Hargrove, 2020) study of DJJ youth served in residential commitment programs indicated that education and employment-CTE commitment were two of the most impactful protective factors for reducing recidivism.⁴³ Further, high-fidelity CTE during residential commitment has been shown to reduce recidivism and improve employment outcomes when youth return to the community.⁴⁴

[38] Cavendish, W. (2014). Academic attainment during commitment and postrelease education-related outcomes of juvenile justice-involved youth with and without disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 22(1), 41-52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426612470516>; Foley, R. M. (2001). Academic characteristics of incarcerated youth and correctional educational programs: A literature review. *ibid.*, 9(4), 248-259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106342660100900405>; Sedlak, A. J., & Bruce, C. (2010). *Youth's characteristics and backgrounds: Findings from the survey of youth in residential placement* (Juvenile Justice Bulletin, Issue).

[39] Blomberg, T. G., Clark, J., Mann, K., Orange, J., Pesta, G., & Valentine, C. (2011). *Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEED) 2009–2010 annual report to the Florida Department of Education*.

[40] Foley, R. M. (2001). Academic characteristics of incarcerated youth and correctional educational programs: A literature review. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 9(4), 248-259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106342660100900405>; Sults, S., Dunn, K., & Sabree, N. (2014). *Just learning: The imperative to transform juvenile justice systems into effective educational systems. A study of juvenile justice schools in the south and the nation*.

[41] Farrington, D. P. (2003). Developmental and life-course criminology: Key theoretical and empirical issues—the 2002 Sutherland Award address. *Criminology*, 41(2), 221-225.; Sampson, R. J., & Laub, J. H. (1993). *Crime in the making: Pathways and turning points through life*. Harvard University Press.

[42] Baglivio, M. T., Wolff, K. T., Piquero, A. R., DeLisi, M., & Vaughn, M. G. (2018). The effects of changes in dynamic risk on reoffending among serious juvenile offenders returning from residential placement. *Justice Quarterly*, 35(3), 443-476. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2017.1317013>; Blomberg, T. G., Bales, W. D., Mann, K., Piquero, A. R., & Berk, R. A. (2011). Incarceration, education and transition from delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 39(4), 355-365. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2011.04.003>; Cavendish, W. (2014). Academic attainment during commitment and postrelease education-related outcomes of juvenile justice-involved youth with and without disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 22(1), 41-52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1063426612470516>; Natsuaki, M. N., Ge, X., & Wenk, E. (2008). Continuity and changes in the developmental trajectories of criminal career: Examining the roles of timing of first arrest and high school graduation. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37(4), 431-444. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-006-9156-0>; Steele, J. L., Bozick, R., & Davis, L. M. (2016). Education for incarcerated juveniles: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 21(2), 65-89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2015.1133308>

[43] Hay, C., Stults, B., Copp, J., Young, B., & Hargrove, E. (2020). *Predicting reoffending and informing treatment for Florida residential youth*.

[44] Ameen, E. J., & Lee, D. L. (2012). Vocational training in juvenile detention: A call for action. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 60(2), 98-108. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2012.00008.x>; Steele, J.

The literature collectively indicates that educational and CTE achievements during residential commitment stays can propel youth to positive outcomes in the community, thus promoting long-term success for the youth, while enhancing public safety.⁴⁵ In recognition of this, DJJ is committed to providing individualized education and workforce preparation services that are tailored to the unique needs and preferences of the residential commitment population and their families. Matching services to address juveniles' top criminogenic needs has yielded extraordinary results for youth treatment and outcomes;⁴⁶ however, educational and CTE needs do not currently receive the same degree of responsivity/service matching and only occasionally inform residential program placement decisions. Beyond specialized residential programs (e.g., sex offender, intensive mental health, developmental disability, etc.), many of DJJ's programs offer similar evidence-based services in addition to required education classes. The use of individualized learning plans (ILP), special education, and other activities facilitate youth access to education programs,⁴⁷ but the core educational and workforce preparation services are, with some exceptions, uniform across residential programs.

The sameness of educational and CTE services persists despite substantial variation in youth interest and ability to engage with traditional education programs and to successfully transition to a community-based school upon their release. Some youth may benefit from an enhanced focus on preparing for a high school equivalency diploma, while CTE and post-secondary opportunities would improve the employment prospects for youth that already have a high school diploma or equivalency. These alternative opportunities are available in DJJ's residential programs, but merely supplement the core focus on traditional education and are limited due to "competing academic priorities, students' poor reading ability, short lengths of stay, security issues, and insufficient information and coordination among providers" (OPPAGA, 2010, p. 1).⁴⁸

Given their importance to youth outcomes, DJJ will examine options for new educational and workforce education structures and strategies across residential commitment programs that accommodate a youth's educational and post-secondary credentialing needs. This includes the provision of specialized education-oriented pathways for residential programs: traditional education, high school equivalency diploma preparation and completion with CTE, and intensive CTE and post-secondary services for youth with a high school diploma or equivalent. DJJ will utilize a youth's risk factors, protective factors, and educational status to discuss optimal placement decisions with youth and their families. For example, past research suggests youth who are older and substantially below grade level struggle to return to community-based schools

L., Bozick, R., & Davis, L. M. (2016). Education for incarcerated juveniles: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 21(2), 65-89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2015.1133308>

[45] Hay, C., Stults, B., Copp, J., Young, B., & Hargrove, E. (2020). *Predicting reoffending and informing treatment for Florida residential youth*.

[46] Baglivio, M. T., Wolff, K. T., Howell, J. C., Jackowski, K., & Greenwald, M. A. (2018). The search for the holy grail: Criminogenic needs matching, intervention dosage, and subsequent recidivism among serious juvenile offenders in residential placement. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 55, 46-57. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2018.02.001>

[47] Blomberg, T. G., Blomberg, J., Waldo, G. P., Pesta, G., & Bellows, J. (2006). Juvenile justice education, no child left behind, and the national collaboration project. *Corrections Today*, 68(2), 143-146.; Blomberg, T. G., Clark, J., Mann, K., Orange, J., Pesta, G., & Valentine, C. (2011). *Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEEP) 2009-2010 annual report to the Florida Department of Education*.

[48] OPPAGA. (2010). *Juvenile justice students face barriers to high school graduation and job training*; *ibid.*, *ibid.*, *ibid.*



following their release.⁴⁹ Further, youth with insufficient social support and time-intensive obligations (e.g., children, full-time employment, etc.) may face barriers to the rigid time and scheduling demands of traditional school environments. Youth that have previously attained a high school diploma or equivalent will be best served by post-secondary and CTE opportunities. While educational needs will be prioritized, all programs will continue to provide evidence-based treatment services matched to the youth's other criminogenic needs.

The traditional education pathway will be tailored to youth pursuing a high school diploma. Cumulative educational disadvantage—much of which predates juvenile justice involvement—poses considerable impediments to high school diploma progress for the commitment population.⁵⁰ Requiring youth with marked cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioral impediments to engage with traditional education services can be counterproductive. Frustration with negative outcomes and continued failures in this setting can further diminish the protective factors of education and even negate treatment gains for other criminogenic risk factors.⁵¹ Matching traditional school services to youth with both the ability and desire to pursue a high school diploma can facilitate educational progress during commitment.⁵² Less than 10% of youth earn a high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma during their commitment, and the vast majority of youth finish completing their degree in the community. Youth enrolled in DJJ schools have enjoyed increasing success in high school diploma attainment, with the most recent figures from FY 2020-21 indicating 59% of students graduate or receive a high school equivalency.⁵³ Therefore, traditional education programs will feature enhanced transition efforts focused on school re-enrollment and educational support while remaining focused on a balanced approach that reinforces school and public safety.

Youth that do not prefer the traditional educational path and have pronounced educational delays will have an opportunity to participate in a specialized high school equivalency diploma program. The high school equivalency diploma is an additional pathway to receiving a high school equivalency diploma.

[49] Blomberg, T. G., Bales, W. D., Mann, K., Piquero, A. R., & Berk, R. A. (2011). Incarceration, education and transition from delinquency. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 39(4), 355-365.

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High school equivalency diploma programs are typically distinguished by their focus on short-term test preparation focused on core subjects and core competencies. Once received, a high school equivalency diploma demonstrates a high school graduate level knowledge and can be used as a high school equivalent when pursuing post-secondary and employment opportunities. Most deep-end juvenile justice-involved youth that successfully secure a high school degree do so by attaining a high school equivalency diploma.⁵⁴ Studies of committed adult and juvenile populations indicate that high school equivalency diploma attainment can help reduce recidivism and increase employment.⁵⁵ However, high school equivalency diploma attainment alone is not a sufficient protective factor to improve youth criminal and employment trajectories.⁵⁶ It is critical to pair high school equivalency diploma programs with CTE, post-secondary, and cognitive skills services that enable youth to leverage their high school equivalency diploma progress or attainment during commitment to educational and employment opportunities upon release.⁵⁷ To this end, DJJ will explore the Integrated Education and Training model that provides students with key basic educational skills while allowing them to simultaneously pursue a high-demand, high-value CTE credential. This model shows great promise in its ability to successfully provide program completers with a solid educational and financial foundation that allows individuals to grow and expand their careers.

Finally, youth that have already received their high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma prior to placement in a residential commitment program will be encouraged to participate in a CTE- and post-secondary opportunities pathway. These youth have reached an important educational milestone that will allow them to be competitive in the future. One of the primary barriers to long-term success facing juvenile justice-involved youth is the stigma associated with criminal offending, which can present barriers to employment and higher education upon reentry.⁵⁸ However, employers indicate that demonstrating work qualifications (e.g., prior work experience, technical skills, soft skills, etc.) can mitigate concerns regarding the employability of youth with criminal records.⁵⁹ While additional robust research in this area is still needed, the current empirical evidence suggests that CTE can positively impact youth employability and reduce recidivism, but, like other interventions, its effectiveness is dependent upon program quality.⁶⁰ Youth on this pathway will receive CTE and post-secondary educational opportunities designed to prepare them for desirable employment prospects, provide them with long-term credentialing opportunities that allow for stackable credentials, and discourage future recidivism.

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Facilitate Successful Transition to the Community

The value of transitional services for juveniles returning to the community is critical to their long-term success. These transition services provide preparation for community reentry and ongoing support to ensure youth have continued access to critical services in the community such as education and employment pursuits, mental health treatment, independent living, etc.⁶¹ While youth exiting residential care routinely receive transition services from a designated transition specialist, the quality and nature of transition services may benefit from enhanced advising and evaluation. Further, these transition services will be responsive to the educational and post-secondary progression youth achieve while in DJJ residential programs. A recent collaboration between DJJ and Tallahassee Community College, Project Anchor, is emblematic of these efforts. This pilot program provides structured workforce education and career readiness services in residential facilities and intensive transition that includes personalized success plans, consultations with career navigators, and access to post-secondary opportunities.



DJJ will also increase its outreach to potential employers in Florida. This will ensure the alignment of CTE curriculum with in-demand technical and soft skills. Further, DJJ will promote existing programs designed to reduce barriers for young adults with a juvenile criminal record. For example, the U.S. Department of Labor offers hard-to-place individuals, including those with criminal records, access to employment fidelity bonds at no cost. These bonds protect employers from potential losses such as employee theft for the first six months of employment, up to a limit of \$5,000, and are offered at no cost. To support youth in obtaining employment, DJJ staff and transition providers will be encouraged to assist youth in obtaining federal employment bonds and educate potential employers regarding the protections offered by these bonds.



“Workforce education provides a pathway for Floridians to succeed. My administration will continue to invest in workforce development and equip Floridians with the skills necessary to thrive in the workforce and support their families.”

-Florida Governor Ron DeSantis

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CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has undeniably and exponentially improved its performance in recent years due to the exceptional leadership and commitment of our team and partners to improve outcomes for the students and families we serve. Florida's communities are safer as we have witnessed historic reductions in juvenile referrals, commitments to secure facilities, and recidivism rates as a result of this outstanding work. However, it is important that we, as an agency, are cognizant of the fact that complacency is the enemy of future success, and failing to continue capitalizing on our recent successes will doom us to a future of mediocrity. It is imperative that we continue to seek innovative ways to improve our performance and outcomes as we work to accelerate the momentum we have created.

To that end, our agency must act with an elevated sense of urgency and utilize the massive amount of data at our disposal to create and support an agile system of accountability capable of quickly adjusting to current problems, emerging trends, and the needs of the students, families, and communities we serve. We must embrace a non-negotiable commitment to injecting our five guiding principles into the operational DNA of our agency and throughout the entire comprehensive juvenile justice system.

We have successfully built an exceptionally strong foundation allowing us to launch our next phase seamlessly and expeditiously. Our principles define us as an agency by setting the conditions necessary for us to complete our mission, and we have imposed great expectations on ourselves to recruit, develop, and retain a world-class and talented workforce, amazingly innovative and adaptive leaders, and an exceptional team-oriented culture to drive unprecedented future outcomes as we continue to lead the nation.

Embracing high-quality and effective services, with an unmatched expectation for exceptional customer service, are the key ingredients to this vision and plan. We have constructed four cornerstones that will propel us further down the path of excellence by embracing world-class talent and leadership, implementing evidence-based practices, utilizing data-informed decision-making, and emphasizing youth academic achievement and post-secondary success. Each cornerstone is interconnected and must be implemented with fidelity to ensure the success and future opportunities of the students and families we serve. These cornerstones serve as the foundation for work currently underway and provide us with the necessary conditions to allow us to seize the opportunities before us in the coming days, weeks, months, and years ahead.

