



The Problem

*For too many years, the Department of Youth Services (DYS) has not received sufficient funding to support its critical mission to rehabilitate youth and successfully transition them back to our communities. **Continued shortfalls in funding for FY2012 will cause a crisis at DHS, compromising the care of the children and youth it serves and the safety of the public.***

FY2011 and proposed FY2012 funding for DHS is less than what is needed just to maintain current programs:

- The original budget for the current fiscal year (\$143 million) has resulted in a \$4 million deficit. Both the Governor and Legislature acknowledged that this budget was insufficient, and in February, 2011, had to authorize an additional \$1 million dollars in a supplemental budget.
- The Governor's FY2012 budget (House 1) further reduces DHS's budget to \$135 million, another 6% decrease.

While DHS has successfully reduced the use of secure detention without impacting public safety, the proposed budget cuts will compromise the agency's ability to maintain even minimum programming for youth who must be detained securely and prohibit any ability for DHS to develop more low-cost alternatives to detention.

- Through participation in the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and utilization of less secure (and less expensive) placement options (such as specialized foster care), DHS has maintained public safety at a lower cost. However, DHS must be able to maintain minimum program capacity for those youth who are appropriately placed in secure detention units.
- Additionally, there is little funding for effective and less costly alternatives-to-detention. Cuts to the DHS budget will undermine the significant progress that has been made in diverting low-risk youth and providing appropriate alternatives to secure detention. If DHS had been allowed to re-invest its savings in these alternatives, the youth in DHS care would be better served, at **no cost to public safety**.

DYS must be funded to extend its programs to oversee secure Alternative Lock-up Programs (ALPs) for youth arrested when courts are closed.

- Until now, DHS has not been responsible for youth held in secure confinement between arrest and arraignment. Unlike the non-secure ALPs, which are funded and overseen by the Department of Children and Families, secure ALPs, which are required in order to meet a federal mandate and prevent harm to children, have been funded through the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) with a patchwork of federal discretionary funds.
- Massachusetts has been found out of compliance with a core requirement of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), resulting in a dramatic reduction in federal funding. ALPs can no longer be maintained with federal dollars.
- In order to protect the public, safeguard the rights of youth, and comply with the federal mandate, DHS must be allocated \$3 million to oversee 5 regionally-based secure ALPs.

The Impact

The safety of the DYS youth and the public will be at risk:

In the last four years, DYS has closed over 400 residential beds across the Commonwealth for committed and detained youth. This significant reduction in beds has made it difficult to separate older youth from younger children, violent from non-violent offenders, and co-defendants and members of rival gangs from each other

- DYS may be forced to reduce and/or eliminate such essential services as GED classes and vocational training, both key components to reducing recidivism rates.
- Reduced bed capacity has decreased the range of programs available within each region, particularly for girls. For example, girls from central Massachusetts must be transported to Brockton or Springfield for detention. This increases transportation costs, interferes with the ability of families to participate in their children's treatment, and creates barriers to successful re-integration in the community.
- Less restrictive settings such as specialized foster care and transitional living programs have been significantly reduced. Because high-end offenders will need secure placements, which are more costly and often inappropriate for many youth, these will be the only residential programs that remain. DYS will, once again, be forced into a corrections model.
- Mental health services, already insufficient for a growing population with mental health issues, will be jeopardized. We all learned from the past rash of suicides and suicide attempts of youth in DYS custody how essential these services are to keep these youth safe
- Educational services, which have been responsible for higher rates of passing MCAS, more successful transitions back to public school settings, and greater literacy rates among DYS students, will be reduced. These are all key to the future success and productivity of DYS youth.

The proposed budget is penny-wise and pound-foolish. The ultimate cost to the taxpayers will greatly exceed any short-term savings provided through program cuts:

- The failure to rehabilitate these youth not only causes personal harm to future victims, but also imposes a hefty cost on the taxpayers. It is estimated that each youth who grows up to be a career criminal will cost the taxpayer \$2 to \$4 million dollars (through the cost of time in adult prison, lost taxes and lost wages, healthcare for uninsured, etc.).
- Last year, DYS implemented a new community re-entry system of services based on best practices, yet there has not been adequate funding to support the development and enrollment of the youth in community-based employment, education and civic engagement programs. Non-profit organizations, also facing limited resources in this economy, are unable to absorb the numbers of DYS youth that are entering their programs without state funding.
- Beginning in 2003, the legislature provided DYS with specific funding to hire licensed mental health clinicians and certified teachers to improve the quality of educational services and to implement gender-specific services. These targeted investments helped achieve a dramatic reduction in recidivism rates (now at 30% for males and 9% for females). Budget cuts will end these targeted investments and will drive up recidivism rates.

The Solution

At a minimum, DYS must be allocated maintenance funding of \$ 149 million to properly sustain residential and community programs and to oversee secure ALPs.