

**Department of Corrections**

Written Testimony of Jodi Taylor

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Before the J. Russell (Russ) Jennings Joint Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice Oversight

November 18, 2024

Chairperson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the operations and initiatives of the Johnson County Juvenile Services Center. I appreciate the committee's commitment to overseeing the welfare and rehabilitation of the youth in our care. Today, I will cover key service areas, including our Juvenile Detention Center operations, education, mental health services, behavior management, and family engagement programs.

Our Juvenile Detention Center is licensed by the Department for Children and Families to house youth ages 10 to 17. While the facility is licensed for 69 youth, we are budgeted to serve up to 40. Within this framework, we provide comprehensive services to meet their medical, mental health, educational, and behavioral needs.

We partner with VitalCore Health Strategies to deliver 24/7 on-site medical services. Key components include:

- Admission screenings for all youth.
- Physical assessments and TB testing are conducted within three days of admission.
- Access to a mobile eye clinic for biannual vision testing.
- On-demand mobile X-ray imaging.

These services ensure the physical well-being of the youth in our care and align with best practices for facility-based healthcare.

Mental health is a critical area of focus, supported by two licensed mental health clinicians who provide:

- Crisis management.
- Individual and group counseling.
- Level One assessments.

With the recent implementation of the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs (GAIN), we can now make referrals for mental health and substance use disorder assessments, broadening our capacity to address complex behavioral health challenges.

Education is provided through a partnership with the Olathe School District. Our educational team includes:

- Three full-time teachers,
- One paraeducator,
- A long-term substitute teacher,
- One administrative support staff member.

The district collaborates with the youth's home schools to ensure continuity of learning. Notably, some youths have graduated from high school while in our facility. This year, one youth successfully graduated, and we celebrated with their family in a ceremony featuring cake, photos, and positive recognition of their achievement.

Our facility employs the Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) framework to encourage pro-social behaviors through positive reinforcement and early intervention. Core features include:

- Staff modeling and teaching core skills in daily interactions.
- Incentive systems, such as "Trust Dollars," allow youth to earn rewards like additional recreation time or phone calls.

We also offer evidence-based programs such as:

- Decision Points: A structured decision-making framework.
- Boys' Council and Girls Circle: Programs fostering personal growth and healthy relationships.
- Interactive Journaling: A self-reflective tool that helps youth develop new insights and skills.

Our activities and family engagement programs provide structured, meaningful opportunities for youth, including:

- Recreational activities such as tournaments, puzzles, and access to gaming systems.
- Quarterly Community Connection Events, where youth and their families share meals, engage in activities and learn about our programs. These events are integral to strengthening family bonds and received the Barbara Allen Hagen Award for family engagement excellence.

We continuously strive to improve our operations through Performance-based Standards (PbS), which help ensure safety, accountability, and effective outcomes.

In addition to our detention center services, the Juvenile Intake and Assessment Center (JIAC) supports law enforcement and families by:

- Accepting offender drop-offs and addressing Child in Need of Care (CINC) cases.
- Manage Notices to Appear (NTA) and supervise pre-trial cases.

The Johnson County Juvenile Services Center is committed to providing high-quality, evidence-based care and rehabilitation for the youth we serve. By addressing their medical, mental health, educational, and family needs, we aim to reduce recidivism and promote successful reentry into the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi Taylor  
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