



## Message from DYS Assistant Director Linda S. Janes

Strategies to Promote the Safety, Security and Well-being of Youth and Staff

May 30, 2013

Dear Staff and Stakeholders:

I am honored to have the opportunity to serve you as DYS Assistant Director for a month now and appreciate the warm welcome that you have extended. I appreciate your open and honest discussions with me about how we can best enhance our agency operations and serve the youth in our care. Your thoughtful feedback is valuable to us.

Our focus is to create safe, positive environments where youth can change their lives. We will accomplish this by immediately targeting the following four key areas over the next three to six months:

- **Violence reduction:** assaults on youth and staff are unacceptable, and youth will be held accountable.
- **Zero tolerance for sexual exposure:** we will improve youth's pro-social skills by making it clear that sexual exposure is inappropriate and intolerable.
- **Reduction of gang activity:** since many of the youth in our care are involved in gang involvement, we will increase our gang interventions to reduce active and disruptive gang activity.
- **Enhancing youth reentry efforts to reduce recidivism:** we will help youth build meaningful relationships with the community prior to their release to support youth in making a positive transition back into the community.

We will progress toward these goals using Back-to-Basics, a continuous improvement process that is designed to improve and enhance the current state of operations, specific areas, policies, concerns and processes. We recognize that DYS employees are our most valuable source of information. Therefore, it is very important to receive input from line staff who actually perform the job duties, as well as employees who supervise the areas, when conducting this process. Back-to-Basics helps us get back to focusing on our core functions of safety and security of staff and the youth we serve.

Our schedule of milestones follows:

- In June, meetings and focus groups will be conducted at all sites.
- By July, sites will have chartered action plans.
- Each site will conduct reviews based upon the goals established by each site's charter.
- Throughout the process, we will be in continuous communication to discuss our core goals and solicit feedback.

We know we have challenging youth in our care, and it's critical for us to work together to hold youth accountable. Providing consistent consequences for inappropriate behavior, along with incentives to acknowledge and encourage pro-social behavior, solidifies our foundation of safety, security and rehabilitation of youth. Back-to-Basics will guide us in a truthful, meaningful process so that we are able to see quick and tangible improvements.

Thank you for your support of these goals over the next 3 to 6 months. I truly believe that staff are our most important resource, and we can only accomplish these goals with your commitment and hard work.