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**Ohio Department of Youth Services**

## Responsible Public Policy

The Department of Youth Services (DYS) touches the lives of thousands of youth in Ohio. Beyond youth in DHS facilities and those on parole, DHS funds and supports over 610 direct service programs throughout the state offering nearly 110,000 youth (based on annual program admissions) opportunities and services to effect positive change.



## Back to Basics

In juvenile corrections, safety will always be our number one priority. We work hard to create safe environments for the youth in our care, visitors, volunteers, mentors, contractors, and for one another working at DHS. We are all responsible to create environments that are safe, where youth can receive the services, treatment and education that they need in order to become contributing members of society.

During the first month of the year, I had the opportunity to tour all of our facilities. What I saw in the field has affirmed to me your commitment and dedication to our youth. Line staff were unified, supporting one another. Administrative staff were active at the facilities, accessible and active in each facility's operations. Several guests accompanied me on these visits and have provided feedback with their "fresh eyes," noting strengths and ideas for improvement. Gary Mohr, Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, is serving as a special advisor to our agency. As you may recall, Mr. Mohr is a former deputy director and facility superintendent at DHS, and he will assist us in our efforts to make improvements.

In the coming months, our agency will be focusing on a "back to basics" approach in the field. This process will help us as we consider the best ways of managing difficult youth. Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility has been selected as the pilot site, and a multi-disciplinary team will conduct the review. All post-orders and operating procedures will be reviewed with the line staff that use them. Amnesty will be offered in exchange for open and honest information. Central office, the training academy and other DHS sites will also be assessed. Our goal is not to catch staff doing wrong, but to understand how staff really do their jobs. Questions like the following will be asked:

- What does policy/post orders require?
- What are you really doing?
- How would you re-write your post orders to accomplish what needs to be done?

Staff will be asked for suggestions, improvements will be developed and solutions will be implemented. The end result will be safer and more efficient environments for both youth and staff.

As a reminder, please take advantage of the employee suggestion boxes located at each facility and regional office. You can also email your suggestions for improvements to [suggestions@dys.ohio.gov](mailto:suggestions@dys.ohio.gov). I value your input and firsthand knowledge. Each message will be read, considered and receive a response.

Remember, safety is everyone's job. I trust that you will embrace our back to basics initiative. I appreciate your willingness to make DHS a safer and better environment for our staff to work and our youth to live.

