Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

DJJDP Legislative Update - March 2025

In Raleigh, budget season is kicking into full gear. The top DJJDP priorities for this upcoming budget season include investments in our employees, safety and security at our facilities, and the services we provide for youth throughout the state. Highlights of this year's budget request include:

- **Employee Compensation** - Increase salaries for all employees and provide additional labor market reserve funds to help address turnover, equity and compression.
- **Salary Increases for Direct Care Staff** - Increase salaries for direct care positions currently included on step pay plans, including youth counselor technicians, youth behavioral specialists, youth counselors and juvenile court counselors, bringing starting pay for these positions to more than $40,000.
- **Juvenile Remediation Programming** - Support the full implementation of juvenile capacity restoration across North Carolina through state appropriation of funds. This program helps juveniles understand trial proceedings, assist in their own defense, and move forward in the justice system. This investment will support a program coordinator, training for service providers, and contracts for behavioral health, education and basic needs.
- **NC S.A.F.E. Funding** - Continue the NC Secure All Firearms Effectively (NC S.A.F.E.) campaign. Firearm fatalities are the leading cause of injury death for children and teens in North Carolina, and safe firearm storage is proven to reduce incidents. The NC S.A.F.E. initiative is a campaign to reduce accidental casualties through responsible firearm storage. The initiative also provides locks and safes to firearm owners, safeguarding young lives and preventing tragedies and theft.
- **Capacity of Residential Contractual Services** - Allows for the continuation of residential juvenile services at the Western Area Multipurpose (WAMP) Crisis and Assessment Center. These funds will allow the center's nine beds to remain open to serve approximately 240 juveniles per year who need out-of-home placements to stabilize behaviors.

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Leonard Named Eastern Assistant Area Administrator

Sonynia Leonard has been named Court Services Eastern Assistant Area Administrator and began her new duties Jan. 6. Leonard brings a wealth of experience to her new role, having worked in juvenile justice and adult correction for nearly 31 years. In 2008, she joined the Juvenile Justice system as a juvenile court counselor in the 7th Judicial District. Most recently, Leonard served as the chief court counselor in Halifax, Hertford, Northampton and Bertie counties for nine years, from January 2016 until January 2025. Leonard graduated as a North Carolina Certified Public Manager in October 2023. She holds master's degree in administration of justice and security from the University of Phoenix and bachelor's degree in political science from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Bates-Harley Named Western Assistant Area Administrator

LaQreshia A. Bates-Harley has been named Western Assistant Area Administrator for Juvenile Court Services. Bates-Harley assumed this post on Dec. 2, 2024.

Bates-Harley began her juvenile justice career in 2006 as a juvenile court counselor trainee in District 27A. Bates-Harley transferred to Forsyth County in 2010. In 2015, Bates-Harley was promoted to chief court counselor in District 1, which is comprised of Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Gates, Pasquotank and Perquimans counties. Her most recent position was as a chief court counselor in Guilford County.

Bates-Harley holds a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and is working on licensure. She holds a master's degree in public administration and graduated from Catawba College with a bachelor's degree in administration of justice.

Chapman Named Chief Court Counselor in District 9

Marie Chapman has been promoted to Chief Court Counselor for District 9 (Caswell, Person, Granville, Franklin, Vance and Warren counties) effective March 3. Chapman began working in human services in New York in 1998. In 2009, Chapman launched her career with Juvenile Justice as a youth counselor at Cabarrus Youth Development Center. She joined Court Services in 2010, and has worked since that point in Davidson County advocating for youth and families. Chapman holds an associate degree in applied science in legal studies from Seton College; a Bachelor of Science degree with distinction (summa cum laude) in criminal justice from Mercy College and a master's degree in criminal justice with a specialization in deviance from The City University of New York John Jay College of Criminal Justice.