Focus: Revamping the process for releasing youth from DYS

The new plan: A plan to reform the process for approving a youth’s release was developed to establish clearly defined parameters for release, ensuring a higher degree of consistency and certainty for all parties involved.

Contributors to the plan: The new release guidelines were developed over the past year with input from many stakeholders including judges, court administrators, victim advocates, DYS staff, prosecutors, academics, service providers, defenders, and attorneys involved in the DYS class action reform effort, S.H. v. Stickrath.

Highlights of the new plan:
- Once a youth completes their minimum sentence, they will not be continued except in cases where:
  - The youth is considered a risk to public safety
  - There is time added for serious misconduct while in custody
  - The need for additional treatment is documented by the treatment team
  - Other special circumstances as determined by the full Release Authority Board
- A Release Authority member will meet with every youth at reception to establish expectations for behavior and treatment
- A Unified Case Plan (UCP) will be developed within 21 days of arrival to the youth’s home institution to guide the youth’s treatment from intake through time on parole
- Special reviews will be conducted to promote opportunities to be released earlier based on positive behavior and security classification
- Face-to-face release reviews will be done by at least two members of the Release Authority (one of which could be a Hearing Officer)
- If a youth’s release date is extended past the original Minimum Sentence Expiration Date (MSED), the youth can appeal the decision to the Division of Legal Services