The Department of Youth Services (DYS) touches the lives of thousands of youth in Ohio. Beyond youth in DYS facilities and those on parole, DYS funds and supports over 650 direct service programs throughout the state offering more than 130,000 youth (based on annual program admissions) opportunities and services to effect positive change. These services range from prevention and diversion programs to residential treatment and community treatment in areas such as mental health, sex offending and substance abuse.

Over the past couple of years, reform has been in progress at DYS to enrich treatment and programming for rehabilitating youth in facilities while promoting greater public safety.

By working with the Juvenile Courts to divert youth who are better served in the community, the juvenile justice system in Ohio has reserved institutional placement for those youth who pose a significant risk to public safety. With the success of these efforts, the DYS population has decreased and resources have been reinvested in diversion options.

The youth who are committed to DYS facilities have challenging needs. Many have experienced abuse and neglect, 70% have serious substance abuse issues, and 64% have had a family member incarcerated. Nearly half of all students are in special education with identified disabilities, and 44% of all DYS youth are on the mental health caseload.

DYS strives to ensure youth receive developmentally appropriate, therapeutic and humane treatment that responds to their individual needs and reduces the likelihood of recidivism. The reform efforts are enhancing the programming offered to youth including education, mental health services, Strength-based Behavior Management, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, sex offender treatment, recreation, life skills, occupational therapy and specialized services for youth with cognitive limitations.

Effectively treating the complex needs of youthful offenders is crucial. By enhancing the treatment milieu of facilities, the Department is supporting lasting change in the lives of youth.