Over the past three years, DYS has embarked on an aggressive agenda of reform that has brought enhancements on many fronts including reducing the facility population, expanding community initiatives and promoting lasting change in the lives of Ohio’s youth through rehabilitation, education and treatment. The DYS “Master Plan” charts the course for reform at DYS. Created with multidisciplinary input and collaboration, the Master Plan serves as our primary guide for reform consistent with the Stipulation Agreement. The Master Plan includes more than 1,000 goals and objectives. Thanks to the commitment and hard work of DYS staff, we have completed nearly 100% of these goals and objectives to date!

Reform Initiatives
Significant and sustained progress has been made in the areas of education, medical, use of force and grievances. The following are just a few examples:

- Our facility population has decreased from an average of 1828 in FY2007 to 823 in FY2011.
- The foundation pieces of the New Freedom-Phoenix curriculum have been implemented in all DYS facilities. This program is used nationally and has been modified to be specifically relevant for ODYS youth. This strength-based approach, based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, helps youth replace criminal thinking with pro-social thoughts and behavior.
- Reentry is incorporated into our educational system through a dedicated teacher skilled in reentry strategies. In addition, a Transition Coordinator at each DYS school works with youth, the Parole Officer and the community to help with the reentry process.
- Special Education is in compliance with the Ohio Department of Education’s special education procedures with DYS teachers using special education software to assist with tracking progress on individualized education program (IEP) goals.
- The Video Communicator Project promotes family involvement, strengthens case management and helps with reentry planning by utilizing webcam technology and wireless internet to connect youth with their families and community while still in a DYS facility.
- Progress in both release reform and a youth’s access to counsel includes full implementation of face-to-face release reviews done by the Release Authority, more inclusion of family members during release reviews and implementation of the Legal Assistance Program, which has been described as a national model.

Next Steps
DYS staff are appreciated for continuing reform progress during the past year. While we celebrate all of the strides we have made, we continue to focus on Master Plan implementation, monitoring and adjustment.

- A PhD Board Certified Behavior Analyst is guiding facility staff in using a team-based approach to managing the most challenging youth behavior.
- Specialized training for staff includes effectively managing youth with significant mental illness as well as youth involved in security threat groups.
- Behavioral health services are being enhanced with quality improvement processes.