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What brought about the Department's planning efforts?

Secretary Sweat: The State Auditor conducted a performance audit of the youth development area in 2003. Findings generated by the audit emphasized needs in the areas of safety and security, education and treatment, staffing and training, and management systems. Needs associated with safety and security were identified as paramount. The Department's approach to addressing these needs is a plan that emphasizes replacement of outdated, poorly designed buildings and the recruitment, hiring, training, and retaining of staff.

How does this recommended plan change the system or the way we work with youth?

Secretary Sweat: The Department is modifying its whole approach to working with youth. It has a new treatment model under development, the assessment center concept, and a new classification for staff who will interact directly with the youth. Even the training approach for staff is being updated with best practice information. Community connectedness and family involvement will be of paramount importance.

The team approach to youth treatment that the future smaller facilities will provide is one critical way working with youth will change. All staff will get to know each youth by name and be in a position to know each and every need the youth has or is addressing in treatment.

What advantages are there programmatically with the smaller facilities?

Secretary Sweat: Smaller facilities designed around a 32-bed model will eliminate many safety and security concerns on the part of staff and students alike, allowing them to spend more time and energy on programming and on each individual's treatment goals. Meals, school, and therapy will be provided on the unit, thereby eliminating the need for staff to devote so many hours per day to transportation and oversight. This in turn will allow staff to devote more of their time to treatment programming, while also developing a deeper understanding of the students in their care. Smaller facilities will also allow for the placement of students in closer proximity to their homes, providing greater opportunities for family interventions. They will also lend themselves better to learning basic living skills. Parenting skills, communication, and interpersonal relationship and social skills can best be learned under close supervision. Finally, smaller groups will allow staff to be more responsive and flexible and less likely to resort to an approach many find necessary when trying to keep the behavior of large numbers of students under control.

What additional safety and security advantages are there in smaller facilities?

Secretary Sweat: The approach to safety and security in the smaller facility begins with thinking from the inside out rather than from a correctional mindset which works from the outside in (i.e., with perimeter fencing and guard posts). The biggest advantage will come from the combining of small-size facilities with improved staffing patterns and training. Because of the blending of the two, positive relationships between staff and

youth will be fostered. The staff will receive training that will be more effective for changing juvenile behavior in the short and long run. This change will in the end make communities much safer as the kids will be instilled with better behavior management techniques.

Employing various types of technologies from having multiple cameras to biometric locking systems is being explored. The Department has some opportunities to work with the National Law Enforcement and Correction Technology Center which is part of the National Institute of Justice on this piece.

Smaller facilities will enable easier supervision of the youth. Smaller facilities, because of their nature, will allow the youth the opportunity to feel safer and more secure because they will not be exposed to the numbers they are in larger facilities. With large numbers comes the opportunity for the weaker youth to be victimized because of the inability of the facility to provide proper supervision. Smaller facilities, if staffed properly, will allow more individualized attention on the youth to not only work on treatment and educational needs but to also give that youth the individual time and attention that is so needed and desired. Smaller facilities, if put where the youth are coming from, will also allow the opportunity for the families to get to know the staff and staff to know families, which is important in achieving our goal of reuniting this youth with his family and environment in order for him to be successful when he returns . Court counselors will play a pivotal role as they will be better able to maintain relationships with their youth and families and will be better able to work with youth development staff.

The General Assembly is addressing the plan this legislative session? What is our goal for this legislative session?

Secretary Sweat: The Department wants authorization for \$85.5 million to cover capital costs which will begin to be incurred in 2005-2006. Such authorization will allow planning for the Certificates of Participation (COPS) to begin in fiscal year 2004-2005. COPS will be used to finance the building plan. COPS are a form of debt issuance, similar to general obligation bonds, often used to raise funds to improve and/or construct buildings.

What time lines are we talking about and when will we know which option will be selected?

Secretary Sweat: The just started legislative session will allow for decisions to be made regarding options. The session is projected to end in early July. If all goes according to the draft construction schedule which exists at this point, we will have a schematic design in early fall, begin site work for building in spring, 2005, building construction in fall, 2005, with facilities starting to open in 2007 and all buildings opened in 2008.

Several factors will play into the schedule with the Department's responsibility for ensuring public safety being the primary factor. How this impacts the schedule is in terms of maintaining bed capacity for the youth population who will be committed to the

Department during the time transition to the future facilities takes place. Movement of youth and staff from current to future facilities will take careful planning; these plans are being developed at this time.

Originally, the Department's performance audit recommended replacing 3 of the state's 5 youth development centers. The Department is now recommending replacing 4 of the centers with 13 smaller ones. That's far different than what was originally talked about in the audit. How did we go from 3 to 13 facilities and from larger to smaller?

Secretary Sweat: Research by independent consultants to the architects, review of national practices/trends, and input from stakeholders including the State Advisory Council on Juvenile and Delinquency Prevention and community members at community focus groups across the state moved the discussion to smaller facilities. The Department began to publically discuss the move to smaller and more facilities in November at the State Advisory Council and in December in committee hearings. Our plan reflects what researchers and stakeholders think needs to be in place to create success for our youth.

Are there any cost saving advantages to having smaller facilities closer to communities?

Secretary Sweat: There will be cost savings in terms of travel expenses for all parties, including families and state and county officials, and a much more effective combined effort to help the youth become successful. Community buy-in will contribute: additional resources (financial, material, and volunteer) that promote ownership and partnership in the Department's rehabilitative and re-entry efforts; closeness to home communities and support; working in a family systems approach which holds great promise to reduce recidivism for both the youth and any siblings in the family; and the total collaborative effort that it would encompass.

The Department plans to consolidate resources (and not unnecessarily duplicate services). It will use local treatment resources, local community colleges, local vocational rehabilitation resources, minimizing transfers of services and potential for breakdowns in communication.

The need for facility replacements is well documented and will save a tremendous amount of money in the long run due to energy efficient structures (current facilities have over 700,000 square feet that require maintenance; the total in the future facilities will be about 480,000 square feet).

Additionally, investing now will reduce costs in the adult prison system.

What about the female population? In the current system, they are in a separate facility. Will that stay the same?

Secretary Sweat: Our goal is to have our female youth as close to their families as possible. Having that community connectedness is key to successfully changing their behaviors. Females make up approximately 15% of our YDC population. Under our recommended plan, we are proposing to treat our female population in two 32-bed facilities that are centrally located in Catawba and Onslow Counties. Our data reflects that the female youth currently in our system live in communities very near these two counties. Both counties will be easily accessible for families to visit.

What new initiatives programmatically speaking will be put into place in a 32, 64 and 96-bed facility?

Secretary Sweat: The most important programmatic changes involve implementation of an education and treatment approach which will address the psychological, educational, and basic life skill needs of the youth. The overriding philosophy is that, with regard to juvenile justice, public safety depends on the success of our youth. And the success of our youth depends on their opportunities to experience education, treatment, physical health, emotional support, family involvement, and community ownership. These components are inseparable.

It is essential that each youth develops into a literate, confident, caring, and capable person who can think critically, solve problems, communicate effectively, and function as a law-abiding, contributing citizen.

If you cannot build them all, what can you get by with?

Secretary Sweat: As long as a juvenile justice system has existed in North Carolina, it has been a “get by” system. At this time, the Department is committed to the establishment of the Comprehensive Strategy with the treatment of committed youth in thirteen future community connected youth development centers. While adjustments in this intent likely will have to be made, at this time the Department is moving forward with the capital plan as described by Option One. It best meets the needs of the State.

What does this allocated funding mean now for DJJDP?

Secretary Sweat: This is great news for our at-risk youth. We thank the Governor and the legislature for their support to make this happen. The \$4.4 million will enable the Department to continue its facility planning process. On November 1st, we will be able to provide the legislature a very detailed facility and transition plan. It will include a detailed project schedule, staffing plan, recommended site locations and land, programming plan, and facility prototype. On December 1, 2004, we will provide the legislature with a detailed therapeutic staffing plan for establishing and reclassifying current positions within DJJDP.

By having \$35 million allocated to us for facility construction, we can go ahead and start the process for construction and not be delayed. We will be able to use up to \$13 million

the first year and \$22 million the second. We will continue to work to seek funding for our entire facility plan during the next legislative session.

Which facilities will be built first?

Secretary Sweat : Our recommended plan focuses on placing committed youth close to their families and communities. We will build facilities based on needs in the catchment areas. The 96-bed facility is slated to replace Stonewall Jackson YDC. It is our oldest YDC and is in dire need of replacement. Other counties that are part of the catchment areas that need YDCs are: Chatham, Edgecombe, Lenoir, and Guilford counties. The facility in Lenoir County will replace Dobbs Youth Development Center.

You've talked a lot about community connectedness and the importance of community resources. Will these facilities still be run by the Department and related services or will some of these be contracted to private, non-profit agencies?

Secretary Sweat: These facilities will be operated by the Department. Because of the importance of community connectedness with the approach, some local contracting of services may be pursued. Such contracting would have to meet a standard of cost savings as well as standards related to management and operations which will be set via the performance-based standards (PbS) process.

The plan names proposed counties. How will land be acquired in county locations where YDCs are not currently placed?

Secretary Sweat: Working with the Office of State Construction, the Department will pursue site locations that are available at no cost (e.g., existing state-owned land). The Department will work closely with the General Assembly and with public officials throughout the state to acquire such sites.

DJJDP will move away from a correctional system by blending education and treatment in a therapeutic environment. What does “blending education and treatment” mean?

Secretary Sweat: The blending of education and treatment is a current component of our HEART (Holistic Enrichment for At-Risk Teens) program at Samarkand YDC. In this pilot program, learning activities are educationally beneficial and also promote social, emotional, and moral development. For instance, the area of conflict resolution and competency is a treatment issue but HEART also turns it into an educational opportunity for girls to learn in social studies, about conflict resolution on a national and international perspective (i.e. wars, social movements, terrorism) and then connect it to their own personal conflict management style. Specifically, HEART includes the following key elements: individualized scholastic plans, with specific goals and timetables; specific attention to special learning needs; innovative mathematical, science, and computer literacy curricula; culturally relevant material focused on female interests and issues; group discussions of psycho-educational topics and health issues; life planning and

vocational education; peer teamwork; collaboration and cooperation; and recreational and experiential learning.

The blending of education and treatment that will take place in the new facilities is an outgrowth of the HEART pilot but also, importantly, is based upon increasing amounts of research regarding positive youth development.

Under the recommended plan, our schools will become smaller. How will smaller schools be better than larger schools?

Secretary Sweat: The smallness of the centers has the following advantages: Teachers and other staff will work as a team because the groups are small. Communication will be enhanced and juveniles' needs will not get "lost" as they can in large institutions. The smaller facility will create a positive learning environment. Because students will not change classes within a small institution, there will be fewer disruptions and much less wasted time. (Changing classes in a large facility loses about 30 minutes of instructional time per day.) There will also be less likelihood that children will become involved in conflicts with one another during class changes. The compactness of the smaller centers will encourage a caring atmosphere where students only work with 2 teachers, and a limited number of staff. Juveniles will feel a part of a group and develop a sense of belonging with caring adults. Families will get to know the staff and will be able to call on them for assistance. Families will also be more involved in the education of their children.

Will education in the smaller facilities cost more?

Secretary Sweat: The cost will be less because the teachers will be integrating their instruction across several core subjects. In other words, there will be more of a thematic approach than a discrete and separate subject matter approach. Second, because our focus will be on preparing students to choose an appropriate career, rather than teaching them a specific vocational skill, the costs of equipment will be lower at the new facilities. Our philosophy is that if we can teach students financial literacy, career readiness, and skills for keeping a job, they will be much better prepared to enter the workforce than if they learned a single trade/vocational skill.

Many of DJJDP's committed youth have special education needs. How will special education needs be met?

Secretary Sweat: Each facility will employ a teacher who is licensed in an area of exceptional children's services (special education). In addition, lead teachers or administrators licensed as special educators will be assigned to regions of the state to provide direct instruction, write individual plans, and/or provide consultation to teachers and staff.

Now that building replacement facilities is a reality, how will the Department handle transition from its current youth development centers to replacement facilities?

Secretary Sweat: Transition has to occur in a number of ways: transition of the current staff into new positions; transition of new staff; transition of youth from old to future facilities; transition to the treatment approach; transition to a community-connected system. There are a number of transition plans being assessed at this time. Deputy Secretary Dwayne Patterson is overseeing our Department transition effort. We have formed a Transition Team under the leadership of Carol Hessenflow. Carol brings to the team years of experience as Director of Cumberland Juvenile Detention Center. We are also forming Community Transition Teams within DJJDP to describe the way these 32 bed facilities will operate 24 hours a day 7 days per week. As we have stated before in past interviews, the 32-bed facility will be our design prototype for all replacement facilities.

Our Transition Team is continuing to develop the Education/Treatment model (“E/T Model”). The “E/T Model” represents a blended approach to education and treatment and is key in our move away from a correctional approach.

We are continuing our meetings with architects to establish the prototype design for the smaller facilities. As the design is developed, Community Transition Teams will be asked for input. We are also working to identify potential sites for the facilities.

It is a busy time for us at DJJDP as we work to meet our two legislative deadlines of November 1 for a detailed facility and transition plan, and December 1 for a detailed staffing plan.

What new initiatives programmatically speaking will be put into place in a 32, 64 and 96-bed facility?

Secretary Sweat: The most important programmatic changes involve implementation of a treatment approach which will address the psychological, educational, and basic life skill needs of the youth. The overriding philosophy is that, with regard to juvenile justice, public safety depends on the success of our youth. And the success of our youth depends on their opportunities to experience education, treatment, physical health, emotional support, family involvement, and community ownership. These components are inseparable.

It is essential that each of our youth develops into a literate, confident, caring, and capable person who can think critically, solve problems, communicate effectively, and function as a law-abiding, contributing member in our communities.

As we move to smaller, more therapeutic facilities, what are preliminary estimates on job opportunities at these facilities and type of positions available?

Secretary Sweat: It's important to remember that even though the replacement facilities are smaller, our Department has been understaffed in the past. We are going to need more staff to operate the facilities because of the 1:8 staff-to-student ratio.

Preliminary estimates for positions at each facility include:

32-bed facility: 54 jobs; 64-bed facility: 109 jobs; 96-bed facility: 148 jobs

We will be employing youth counselors; youth counselor supervisors; late shift staff; teachers; teacher aides; facility directors; principals; psychologists; substance abuse specialists; nurses; recreation staff; food service; maintenance; and administrative support.

The role of direct care staff will change under this new plan. With higher pay comes the need for higher education credentials. How will the Department handle this transition?

Secretary Sweat: The Department will assess current staff qualifications and personally confer with staff to determine their level of interest in moving into youth counselor positions. Training and educational assistance will be offered to assist staff with earning the needed knowledge, skills, and abilities to work in the youth counselor positions which will be a pay grade of 68. There will also be some late shift positions that will remain at the current pay grade of 62.

Staff vacancies and natural attrition will be factors as facilities will not open until 2007. Other state agencies will be collaborated with to assist some staff with transfers to other agencies. Again, it is important to point out that DJJDP has been understaffed in the past, and, in order to carry out this plan, more staff will be needed for us to be successful.

Additionally, staff development is currently developing curriculum which current employees will be able to take advantage of to enhance their qualifications.

What is it like behind the scenes as you prepare for the November deadline? What's taking place?

Secretary Sweat: We are burning the midnight oil so to speak at DJJDP. A lot has to be done before our November deadline for the legislature, and we are making good progress. DJJDP transition staff continues to meet with staff from the Office of State Property regarding state-owned land as potential sites for facilities. Meetings are also taking place with county officials to discuss county-owned land as potential sites. We are meeting with the architectural firm about facility design and security. Our program development team is finalizing programming for the facilities.

We are also working to educate our own employees about the facility plan. This month, staff went to all of our youth development centers to talk with employees about the plan and to answer their questions. We came back with a lot of specific questions about job responsibility in the new facilities, qualifications needed to work in the facilities, retirement packages, and overall facility programming. A lot of that information will be made available in November. We're still working through a lot of the details now. We will work to answer all employee questions.

What will happen with employees who do not meet the criteria for the new youth counselor positions, yet are in direct care provider roles?

Secretary Sweat: The Department will be expanding its staff development offerings and is currently developing curriculum which current employees will be able to take advantage of to enhance their qualifications. Additionally, the Department will be working to obtain additional educational assistance resources for employees.

The Department has an expectation that employees will make efforts to meet the enhanced education and training requirements. The Department will create opportunities for employees so that they can maintain employment in direct care positions.

What are the safety and security advantages smaller facilities?

Secretary Sweat: The approach to safety and security in the smaller facility begins with thinking from the inside out rather than from a correctional mindset which works from the outside in (i.e., with perimeter fencing and guard posts). The biggest advantage will come from the combining of small-size facilities with improved staffing patterns and training. Because of the blending of the two, positive relationships between staff and youth will be fostered. Most of the staff will be professional and will be better at changing juvenile behavior in the short and long run. This change will in the end make communities much safer as the kids are instilled with better behavior management techniques.

Additionally, movement of youth will be greatly reduced. This has several benefits: juveniles will spend over 80% of their day in their living unit areas thereby reducing movement and opportunities for disruption. There will be a reduction in the need for additional escort staff to monitor the juveniles as they proceed from building to building. Dining will occur in the living unit again reducing the need for movement and creating efficiency. Because of less movement, more time will be able to be devoted to treatment/educational needs.

Employing various types of technologies from having multiple cameras to biometric locking systems is being explored. The Department has some opportunities to work with the National Law Enforcement and Correction Technology Center which is part of the National Institute of Justice on this piece.

Smaller facilities make it easier to supervise the population. Smaller facilities, because of their nature, will allow the youth the opportunity to feel more safe and secure because they would not be exposed to the numbers they are in larger facilities. With large numbers comes the opportunity for the weaker youth to be victimized because of the inability of the facility to provide proper supervision. Smaller facilities, if staffed properly, will allow more 1 on 1 time with the youth, to not only work on the treatment and educational needs of the youth but to also give that youth the individual time and attention that is so needed and desired. Smaller facilities, if put where the youth are coming from, also allow the opportunity for the families to get to know the staff and staff

to know families, which is important in achieving our goal of reuniting this youth with his family and environment in order for him to be successful when he returns.

Will the facilities have fences?

Secretary Sweat: The fencing of these facilities depends on facility design, community placement and the desire of the community. The intent is for the facility itself to serve as a perimeter barrier so that fences may not be needed. As the design of the facility is completed, this will become more clearly communicated.

Unfortunately, a lot of people refer to youth development centers as prisons. Will these facilities look like a prison?

Secretary Sweat: No. The facilities will look more like treatment facilities than prisons. Security will be built into the facility in ways that are not obvious. The exterior will most closely resemble a community treatment center. The facilities will be designed to complement the community.

Does this facility plan impact the detention centers?

Secretary Sweat: Not at this time. The Department has initially focused on the role of the youth counselor in the youth development center setting. Once this is finalized via the Office of State Personnel, the implementation of the position in detention centers will be evaluated. Any detention staff who are interested in working as youth counselors in youth development centers will be able to apply for the positions.

Will other employees' salaries or positions be adjusted to reflect the change to the youth counselor positions?

Secretary Sweat: The Department will be examining the entire picture of positions and salaries and will work with the Office of State Personnel to align positions and salaries. The priority will be on the youth counselor positions.