

POLICY

SUBJECT: Youth Voice
NUMBER: RF-751-22
APPLICABLE TO: All Residential and Community Services Employees

APPROVED: /s/ Sam Abed
Sam Abed, Secretary
DATE: 5/17/22

I. POLICY

The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) encourages youth to voice their perspectives and ideas and uses these to meaningfully guide the development and implementation of departmental services, programs and policies that affect youth. DJS encourages youth voice by engaging youth in roundtables, focus groups, surveys, advisory boards, and leadership roles.

II. AUTHORITY

A. Md. Code Ann., Human Services, §9-203 and §9-204.

III. DIRECTIVES/POLICIES RESCINDED

None

IV. FAILURE TO COMPLY

Failure to comply with the Department's Policy and Procedures shall be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

V. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Standard operating procedures have been developed.

VI. REVISION HISTORY

SUMMARY OF REVISION	DATE OF REVISION
New policy issued.	5/17/22

PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: Youth Voice

NUMBER: RF-751-22

APPLICABLE TO: All Residential and Community Services Employees

APPROVED: _____ /s/ Wallis Norman _____

Wallis Norman,
Deputy Secretary of Operations

DATE: _____ 5/6/22 _____

I. PURPOSE

To provide youth with various opportunities to express their voice to key decision makers which is critical to improving DJS services and program outcomes for youth and families.

II. DEFINITIONS

Agency level involves decisions at the headquarters level by the Deputy Secretary of Operations and the Executive Directors of Residential Services.

Behavior Motivation System is a comprehensive system that clearly identifies how positive, prosocial behavior is promoted and reinforced and how negative behavior is refocused.

Facility level involves decisions within the detention facility or treatment program by the Superintendent.

Youth Voice means the opportunity for youth to express their distinct ideas, opinions, attitudes, knowledge, and actions of young people as a collective body that allows a diversity of perspectives and experiences, regardless of backgrounds, identities, and cultural differences.

Youth Participation means youth being included in focus groups and surveys and providing meaningful feedback to the adults requesting information.

Youth Leadership means youth taking on roles within the Behavior Motivation System to be a role model for other youth.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Youth Roundtable

1. The Youth Roundtable (Roundtable) is made up of a group of youth from detention facilities and treatment programs who are engaged in two-way dialogue with agency level staff.
2. The Roundtable gives youth the opportunity to voice their ideas, experiences, and perspectives on the programs and services to key decision makers who have the authority to make decisions and implement systematic change.
3. One virtual videoconference is scheduled every other month with one youth from each detention facility and treatment program.
4. The feedback obtained by the youth voice may affect changes to agency level policy and procedures and improve statewide practices and systems that directly affect the youth.

B. Participation

1. Adult Participants

- a. The Deputy Secretary of Operations along with designated members of the Operations and Education teams coordinate the Roundtable.
- b. Every other month internal and external guests are invited by the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Operations to present items of interest to youth such as food and nutrition, recreation, grievance process, case management, and other types of programming.

2. Youth Selection

- a. The Superintendent or designee shall randomly select different youth based on their interest for the Roundtable.
- b. There is not a set eligibility criteria; all youth are eligible to participate regardless of Level/Treatment Phase in the Behavior Motivation System or length of stay.
- c. In advance of the Roundtable occurring, facility staff and youth shall encourage new youth to participate in upcoming Roundtables by educating the youth on the purpose and outcomes of previous Roundtables.

3. Roundtable Agenda

- a. The Roundtable Agenda is developed by the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Operations five business days prior to the meeting. The agenda consists of:
 - 1) Welcome and Introductions
 - 2) Icebreaker
 - 3) Roundtable Purpose and Etiquette
 - 4) Updates from Various Identified Departments
 - 5) Youth Dialogue
 - 6) Summarize Discussion and Next Steps
- b. The youth agenda items are based on the youth relaying suggestions, ideas and feedback from their peers. Topics may include education, career and

technical opportunities, food, clothing and hygiene, visitation, family engagement, recreation, and other types of programming.

4. Roundtable Outcomes

- a. A meeting with the required agency and facility level staff will be held within seven business days of the Roundtable to discuss the follow up items that need to be addressed.
- b. The Deputy Secretary of Operations will make the final determination on the changes to be implemented.
- c. Once the Roundtable and follow up meetings are concluded, the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Operations will communicate back to youth, staff and facilities within 14 calendar days through the Youth Voice Newsletter. The newsletter highlight approved changes, any changes not approved and a written justification of the reason, and all policy and procedural changes, as applicable.
- d. The Superintendent shall designate staff to ensure the newsletter is posted throughout the facility and provided to youth. The staff shall share the information with youth during other times such as Community Meetings or Youth Advisory Board meetings.

C. Youth Advisory Board

1. General

- a. Each Superintendent shall establish a Youth Advisory Board at each facility as a means of communication between levels of facility leadership and youth.
- b. The Youth Advisory Board meetings shall take place bi-weekly at the *facility level* and are youth-led.
- c. Youth may suggest changes to facility operating policy and procedures to improve the facility culture and environment.
- d. The Superintendent shall provide a schedule of the Youth Advisory Board meetings from January-December to the Executive Director of Residential Services at the beginning of each calendar year.
- e. The Superintendent shall designate a staff for each Youth Advisory Board meeting to provide a youth sign-in sheet and take minutes. The staff shall submit the minutes to the Superintendent within three business days of the Youth Advisory Board meeting.

2. Participation

a. Adult Participants

The Superintendent and other designated facility level staff shall participate in the Youth Advisory Board meetings.

b. Youth Selection

- 1) There is no set eligibility criteria; all youth are eligible to participate regardless of Level/Treatment Phase in the Behavior Motivation System or length of stay.

- 2) In advance of the Youth Advisory Board, the Case Manager Supervisor or designee along with facility unit staff shall meet with youth to gauge interest in participation and select one youth from each living unit/group to participate on the Youth Advisory Board. The staff shall ensure there is an alternate if the youth selected cannot participate.
- 3) The facility staff shall encourage new youth to participate in the upcoming Youth Advisory Board by educating the youth on the purpose and outcomes of previous Boards.

3. Youth Advisory Board Agenda

- a. In advance of the Youth Advisory Board, the youth will meet with their peers on the unit/group to develop an agenda to discuss with the Superintendent. The facility unit staff or designee shall assist youth and their peers with coordinating a meeting and agenda, as needed.
- b. The Superintendent will also bring agenda items to discuss with the youth. Youth Advisory Board Topics may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1) Education;
 - 2) Career and Technical Opportunities;
 - 3) Food;
 - 4) Clothing and Hygiene;
 - 5) Visitation;
 - 6) Family Engagement;
 - 7) Recreation; and
 - 8) Other types of programming.

4. Youth Advisory Board Outcomes

- a. The Superintendent shall meet with the involved facility staff to discuss youth advisory board follow-up items that need to be addressed.
- b. The Superintendent will determine which changes shall be implemented in the facility operating procedures.
- c. The Superintendent, within five business days of the youth advisory board occurring, will ensure the decisions are communicated to the youth through the detention or treatment program case manager.
- d. The detention or treatment program case manager shall provide youth a written summary of any approved changes, any changes not approved and a written justification of the reason, and all policy and procedural changes, as applicable based on the Youth Advisory Board minutes.

D. Youth Focus Groups

1. Each detention or treatment program may form youth focus groups to gain feedback when DJS is considering changes to the Behavior Motivation System.
2. The Director of Behavioral Health and other agency or facility-level identified staff will hold youth focus groups before changes are implemented.

E. Youth Leadership

Youth can serve in various leadership roles at the facility level in accordance with the Behavior Motivation System. These roles are clearly defined in the Treatment Program Handbook.

F. Youth and Family Consultation

Youth and families are encouraged to participate and provide feedback through the use of surveys and committees on programs that have a direct impact on youth and families DJS serves.

G. Family Support Groups

1. The Office of Equity and Inclusion shall hold monthly family support group meetings to provide an open dialogue with DJS staff on their thoughts, feelings or concerns regarding youth involvement with DJS.
2. The family support group meetings occur in the community virtually and families are notified via text and email with a flyer of the date and ways to log in to the support group meeting.
3. There is a designated DJS email address available on the DJS website for families to submit questions.

IV. RESPONSIBILITY

Superintendents and Executive Directors of Residential Services are responsible for implementation and compliance with this procedure.

V. INTERPRETATION

The Deputy Secretary for Operations shall be responsible for interpreting and granting any exceptions to these procedures.

VI. LOCAL OPERATING PROCEDURES REQUIRED

Yes

VII. DIRECTIVES/POLICIES REFERENCED

No policies referenced.

VIII. APPENDICES

None



DJS Policy and Standard Operating Procedures

Statement of Receipt and Acknowledgment of Review and Understanding

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APPLICABLE TO: All Residential and Community Service Employees

I have received and reviewed a copy (electronic or paper) of the above titled policy and procedures. I understand the contents of the policy and procedures.

I understand that failure to sign this acknowledgment form within five working days of receipt of the policy shall be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

I understand that I will be held accountable for implementing this policy even if I fail to sign this acknowledgment form.

SIGNATURE

PRINT FULL NAME

DATE

WORK LOCATION

***SEND THE ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED COPY TO YOUR SUPERVISOR FOR
PLACEMENT IN YOUR PERSONNEL FILE.***