

# “Taking Positive Behavior Support to Scale in Juvenile Justice Settings”

## Background of the Department



The North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (NC DJJDP) was established in July 2000 as the first cabinet-level agency to focus on juvenile justice issues and at-risk youth in the state. NC DJJDP operates five Youth Development Centers (YDCs) and nine detention centers across the state. The mission of the Department is to promote public safety and juvenile delinquency prevention, intervention, and treatment through the operation of a seamless, comprehensive juvenile justice system. The Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention has presented a plan to replace current facilities to the state’s General Assembly in which small, community-connected facilities with adequate staffing are the foundation for an effective, community-oriented juvenile justice system. The Department is currently in the first phase of building these replacement facilities and implementing a new skill base for its staff.

## Positive Behavior Support and North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

The initial goals of implementing Positive Behavior Support (PBS) in NC DJJDP were to aid the Department in shifting to a positive system of managing student behavior, teaching self-management strategies, and increasing students’ academic achievement. The Department embarked on this opportunity under the leadership of Secretary George Sweat. In the fall of 2004, Cynthia Martin, who is the coordinator of PBS for the Department, attended a presentation by Dr. Tim Lewis about implementing PBS in traditional educational settings. Soon after, Dr. Lewis met with the Department’s management team to explain PBS and what implementing the system would entail.

After Dr. Lewis’ presentation, the Department assembled teams that featured representation of facility staff (e.g., teachers, psychologists, directors, and front-line staff), who would be trained over a five-month period by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

After training, four of the five Youth Development Centers developed an action plan for the implementation of PBS in 2005. Year two implementation marked the beginning of PBS in all Youth Development Centers. Below is a brief description of each center’s program:

### C.A. Dillon (Implementation Date: November 1, 2005)

- Combination of existing programs, that included a school store, and a focus on incentives for appropriate behavior
- Target behavior: hallway movement and transitions between activities
- Creation of a student PBS team

Dobbs (Implementation Date: September 1, 2005)

- Motivating Symbol: R.A.M.S which represents Redirecting Attitudes for Men 2B Successful
- Target behavior: hallway movement and transitions between activities
- Student leaders who help remind students of the rules during change of class

Swannanoa Valley (Implementation Date: July 21, 2005)

- Target behavior: Hallway movement and profanity
- Point cards used to record progress of students following the school rules
- Points are exchanged for incentives (e.g., trips to campus stores, weekly celebrations)

Stonewall Jackson (Implementation Date: July 9, 2005)

- Target Behaviors: Contraband, grooming, and disruptive behavior
- Lion paws used to reward students for good behavior
- Paws are exchanged for incentives (trips to campus stores and weekly celebrations)
- “Positive Peers”-the student group created for those students who excel under rules

Samarkand (Implementation Date: July 1, 2006)

- Targeted Behaviors: Character which encompasses overall behavior in the facility
- Students earn points which help them to advance to different stages of their reward system
- Students who excel are recognized as “High Achievers.” These students take on different leadership roles throughout their campus.

### **Initial Results**

Data regarding student infractions and minor rule-breaking are recorded in the North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-Join). NC-Join is a web-based system that allows users to track juvenile progress and placement throughout the North Carolina juvenile justice system.

This analysis compares data about student behavior on a yearly basis. Data were also analyzed on a monthly basis to ascertain possible trends.

### **Year One Implementation (2005-2006)**

Comparing the first year of implementation (2005-2006) to the prior year (2004-2005), Dobbs showed a 41% decrease in rule violations for hallway movement and transitions between activities and a 22% decrease in fights. Dillon showed a 52% reduction in off-task behavior or “horseplay” when compared with their prior year. Swannanoa Valley also showed a 39% decrease in rule violations for hallway movement and transitions between activities.

Stonewall Jackson, the fourth male Youth Development Center to implement, did not show a decrease when compared to the baseline year for either of the behaviors targeted. However, the incidence of contraband possession did show a steady and consistent decline. Another trend was that the school demonstrated a more pronounced downward trend in instances of contraband when compared to the living units. This could be due to the larger representation of school members on the PBS team.

### **Year Two Implementation (2006-2007)**

Implementation of Positive Behavior Support in Year Two involved all five Youth Development Centers. In addition, the Department provided front-line staff with training in principles and methods of creating a therapeutic environment. The purpose of this training is to provide the foundation for creating a structured setting focused on therapeutic activities; to promote positive relationships between youth and staff; to reinforce youth skill acquisition through focused staff-youth interactions; and to provide opportunities for youth to practice establishing new patterns of values, thoughts, and behaviors. This training also provided the Department with a way to reinforce and re-teach the principles of PBS.

All facility PBS teams submitted an action plan that described what areas would be targeted in Year Two. The new plans include the use of student-based teams as an incentive and as a way of working with “Tier Two” students, the continual analysis of data to target, and in some case re-target problem behaviors, working to establish buy-in with reluctant staff members, updating committee membership to be more reflective of entire facility, and ensuring a plan for teaching behaviors is implemented.

Comparing the first year of implementation (2005-2006) to the second year of implementation (2006-2007), Dobbs showed a 3.4% decrease in rule violations for hallway movement and transitions between activities and a 28% decrease in fights. Dillon showed a 34 % decrease in rule violations for hallway movement and transitions between activities. Stonewall Jackson showed a decline of 19% for incidences involving possession of contraband. Swannanoa Valley showed a 54.8% reduction in incidences of recorded profanity. Profanity was its 2006-2007 targeted behavior.

The female facility, Samarkand Youth Development Center, is already implementing aspects of the new therapeutic model. Because of this, their rewards system is based on overall behavior including all behavior alerts, (minor violations) and infractions (major violations); behavior notes; and a point card level system. In its first year of implementation behavior alerts or minor violations were reduced by 28.9%. Infractions or major violations were reduced by 15.9%.

### **Year Three Implementation (2007-2008).**

Year three implementation of Positive Behavior Support includes a refocusing on earlier targeted behaviors. Year two revealed that some behaviors initially targeted have shown an increase in occurrences. It is important to note that each Youth Development Center is at a different level of implementation. The Central Office Core Team is focusing on helping each center move to the tertiary PBS level.

The therapeutic environment model implemented in the Department's new facilities has a strong emphasis on the community. PBS goals for this year also focus on educating the community about PBS. Court Counselor Supervisors were recently trained in the basic foundation of PBS. The training centered on how Court Counselors can implement tenants of PBS in their daily interactions with youth and teach parents about maintaining a positive relationship with their children once released from our facilities. Another example of PBS filtering into the community involved a group of our PBS mentors who recently addressed a group of at-risk students about their experience in the juvenile justice system and how PBS has made a difference in their lives.