

Annual Report

Division of Youth Services

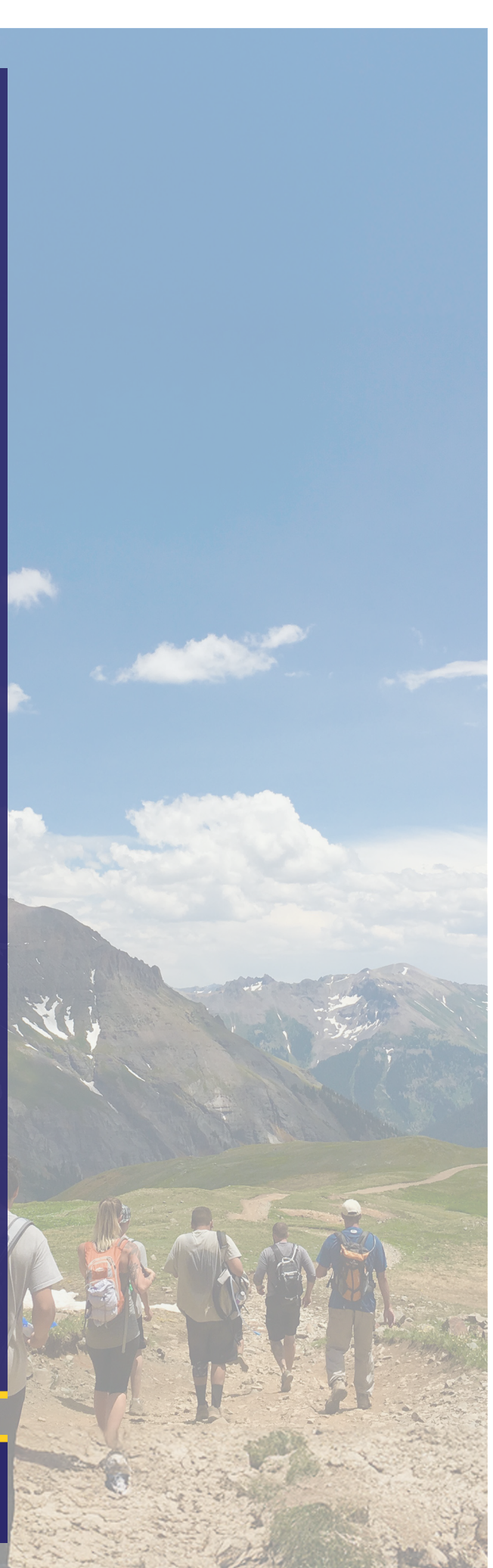
FY 2023-24



COLORADO
Division of Youth Services
Office of Children, Youth & Families

Colorado Department of Human Services
Office of Children, Youth & Families

Jan. 6, 2025



Welcome to the Division of Youth Services

Annual Report 2023-24

This report highlights population data, achievements and challenges of DYS, along with youth success stories while in the Division’s care and the care of community partners throughout Colorado.

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Letter from the DIRECTOR

Greetings,

As we reflect on the past year, I am proud to share the Division of Youth Services' 2023-24 Annual Report, highlighting the Division's progress in advancing our mission to support and uplift youth in our care. This report provides an overview of the populations we serve, our growing restorative justice efforts, expanded treatment services, and educational and vocational programs that shape brighter futures. It also highlights the diverse activities at our youth centers and the inspiring success stories of the young people in our care.

We have seen shifts in system trends, including a rise in the number of youth detained and committed for violent offenses. After six consecutive years of decline, detention admissions have surged 26% when compared to FY 2020-21. This upward trend aligns with increases in juvenile arrests, delinquency filings, detention screenings, new probation intakes, and longer lengths of stay due to the nature of offenses. Nearly 17% of our statewide detention capacity—approximately 35 out of 215 beds—is occupied by youth with direct file, transfer, or reverse-transfer cases, limiting the availability of beds for new admissions. Recognizing this growing need, the Division, in collaboration with the Colorado Youth Detention Continuum Advisory Board, is recommending an increase in secure detention bed capacity to better meet demand.

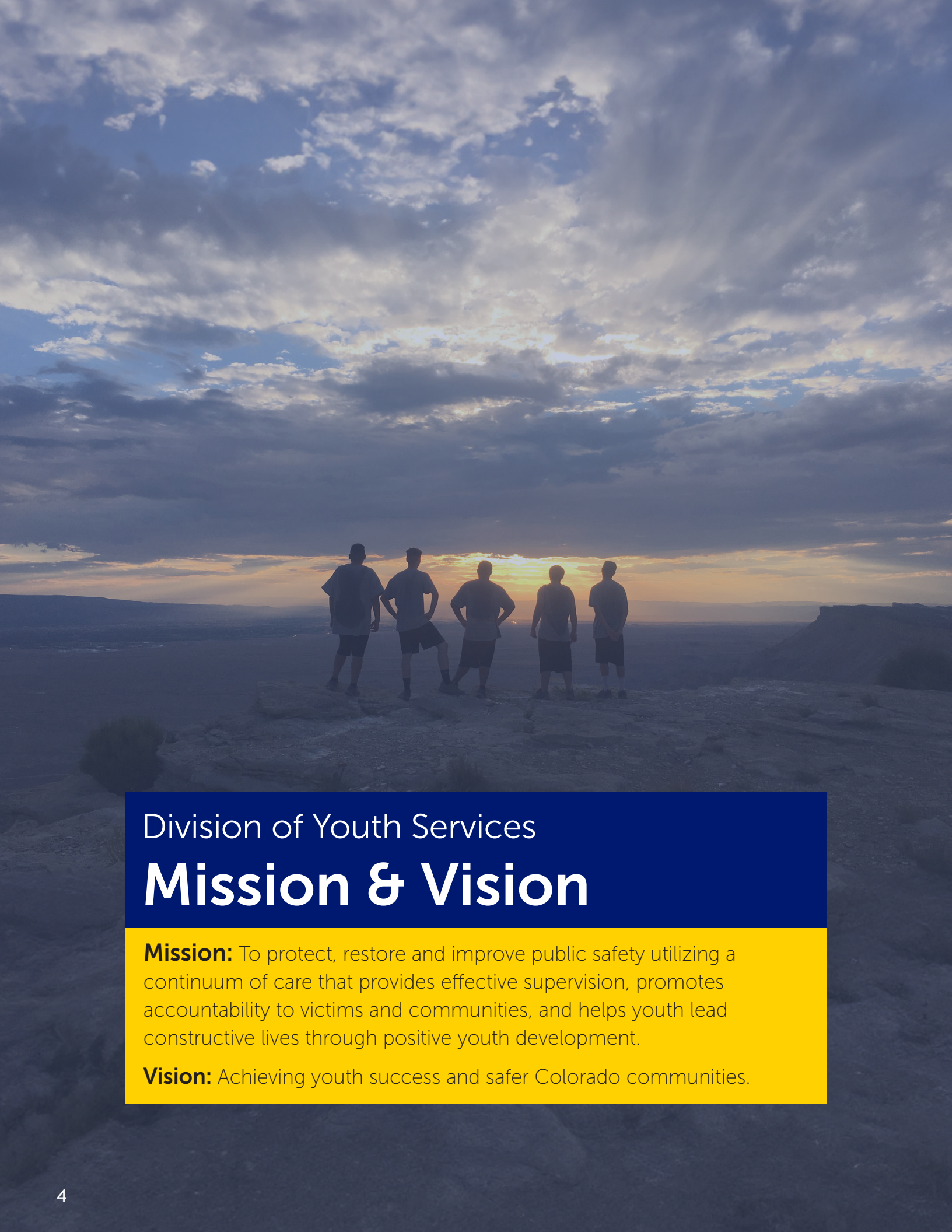
Despite these challenges, we've achieved significant milestones, including the Sanctuary certification of six youth centers and four regional offices and the validation of our crisis management system, Protective Supports and Interventions (PSI), by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care as a model for national replication. Our focus on evidence-based and promising practices in treatment has helped drive historic reductions in recidivism, with the past three years marking the lowest one-year rates in over 18 years and the lowest two-year and three-year recidivism rates in DYS.

These successes are a testament to the dedication of our staff, partners and stakeholders. Looking ahead, we will remain focused on addressing the challenges of rising detention trends while maintaining our commitment to programming that achieves lasting, positive outcomes for youth. I am confident that, with your continued support, we will meet these goals and further our mission to transform lives and strengthen communities.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anders Jacobson'.

Anders Jacobson
Director, Division of Youth Services



Division of Youth Services

Mission & Vision

Mission: To protect, restore and improve public safety utilizing a continuum of care that provides effective supervision, promotes accountability to victims and communities, and helps youth lead constructive lives through positive youth development.

Vision: Achieving youth success and safer Colorado communities.

Spotlight Features

DYS Director Anders Jacobson Appointed Board President of CJJA

Anders Jacobson, Director of the Division of Youth Services (DYS), has been named Board President of the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA), a national organization dedicated to advancing leadership, education and reform in juvenile justice.



CJJA connects and supports juvenile justice leaders, helping them implement transformative practices that improve outcomes for youth, families and communities. DYS's long-standing collaboration with CJJA has been pivotal in driving Colorado's system reforms, made possible by the dedication of staff across the state.

As President, Jacobson aims to address challenges through innovation, collaboration, and high standards, while celebrating the daily achievements of those in the field. "Our committed staff makes a profound impact on young people's lives," Jacobson said. "We are agents of positive change, and it's essential to share and celebrate our successes."

Thank you to the DYS team for your dedication and transformative work. Take pride in your achievements and continue making a difference.

NCCHC Validation

In March 2024, the Division partnered with the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) to conduct a comprehensive review of the crisis management system. After years of effort to refine and improve the system, the Division proudly announces that NCCHC has nationally validated our Protective Supports and Interventions (PSI) 2.0 program.

This achievement marks a significant milestone for DYS, as PSI 2.0 is now recognized as a validated, effective crisis management program. NCCHC's validation letter highlighted PSI 2.0 as a model program:

"This is a quality program that should be replicated in youth services facilities across the United States, based on the informed care it promulgates, the education it provides to patients and staff, and because of the impact it has on safety. The Protective Supports and Intervention Program is in line with national standards and best practices. As such, this program is validated as effective."

This success would not have been possible without the dedication of the Office of Staff Development and DYS team members, who worked tirelessly over the past two years to research best practices, enhance our approach, and deliver PSI 2.0. Their hard work and commitment to excellence have positioned DYS as a leader in youth crisis management.

Population Review

Detained Youth Services

The Division is tasked with delivering both short-term secure detention and community-based detention services to youth who are either pre-adjudicated or sentenced. Youth enter the Division of Youth Services (DYS) through one of two pathways after being taken into physical custody by law enforcement and evaluated using the Colorado Youth Detention Screening Instrument (CYDSI). These pathways include:

- Community-based detention and supervision services
AND
- Secure detention in a state-operated youth center. Secure detention is reserved for those who present a substantial risk of serious harm to others or youth who are a flight risk from prosecution.

The decision regarding detention is made by the screener based on the CYDSI results, statutory criteria, and the Chief Judge's screening order within the appropriate judicial district. Youth who are detained are subsequently assessed for services aimed at reducing the risk of harm or flight, and recommendations for supervised release are submitted to the court.

Youth detained or placed under home detention (with a parent, guardian or kin) are required to attend a juvenile detention hearing within 48 hours. Youth sent home without detention services receive a summons to attend a future court hearing.

23.3

Average length
of stay (in days)

15.9

Average age
at the time of
detention

2,017

Detained
youth served
in FY24

7.8%

(+14 youth per day)

Increase in average daily
detention population since FY23

4,049

Detention
screens

12.1% increase since
FY23 (3,613)

Ethnicity and Gender Distribution

across the detained population

193.2

Average daily
detention population
(7.8% increase from FY23)

2,892

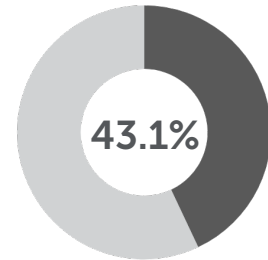
New detention
admissions

78.2% Male

21.8% Female

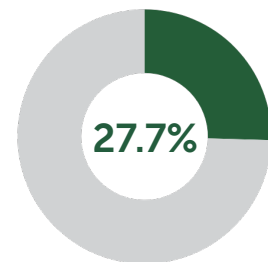
16.5% of the total statewide detention capacity is dedicated to holding youth with direct file, transfer, or reverse-transfer cases. This equates to one out of six beds that are essentially "off line" for extended periods of time, meaning they are unavailable to other/new detainees. Of the 215 detention beds, roughly 35 are occupied by this population, leaving only 180 detention beds readily available for use by new admissions.

Hispanic / Latinx

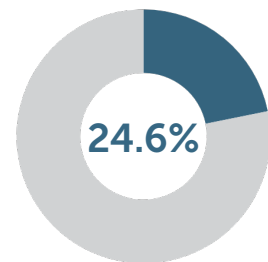


Increased from 36.6% in FY23

Black

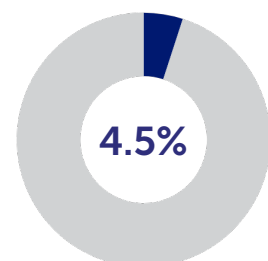


White



Decreased from 32.2% in FY23

Other



Population Review

Committed Youth Services

DYS provides a comprehensive range of services for committed youth through its Continuum of Care model. This model directs the Division's actions throughout the entire commitment process, starting with the initial assessment, continuing through residential placement, and extending to transition and parole supervision services.



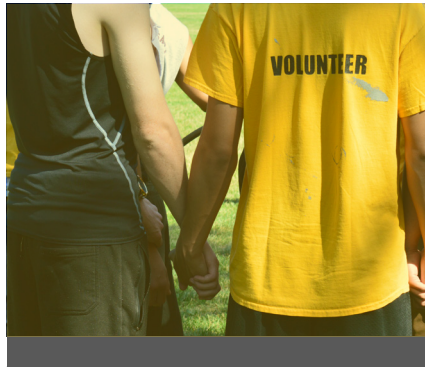
200

New commitments

8%

increase in commitments during FY24

From **185 youth** committed in FY23 to **200 in FY24**



561

Youth served

18.7

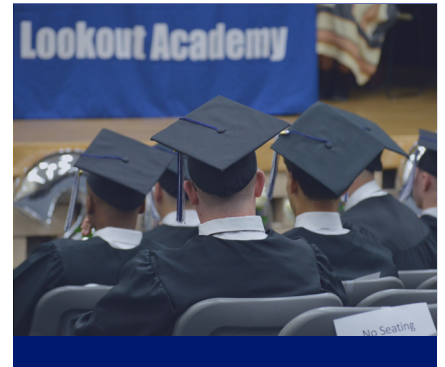
Average length of service (in months)

16.7

Average age at the time of commitment

264.8

Average committed daily population



105

New commitments with violent offenses

20.7% increase from FY23 (87)

Commitment Offense Type:

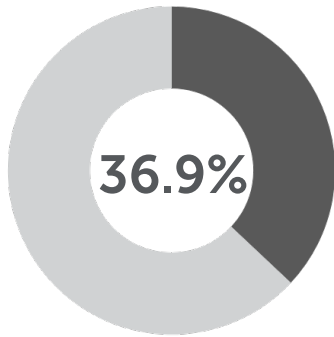
Person	-	66.9%
Property	-	14.0%
Weapon	-	14.1%
Other	-	3.6%
Drug	-	1.4%



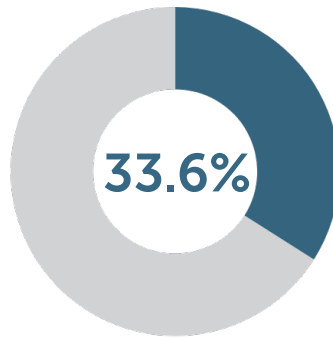
Ethnicity and Gender Distribution

across the committed population

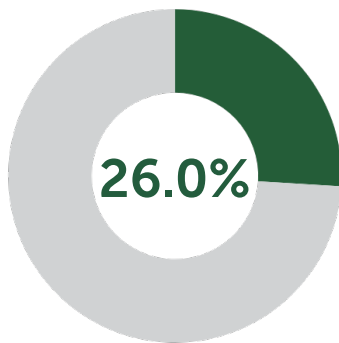
Hispanic / Latinx



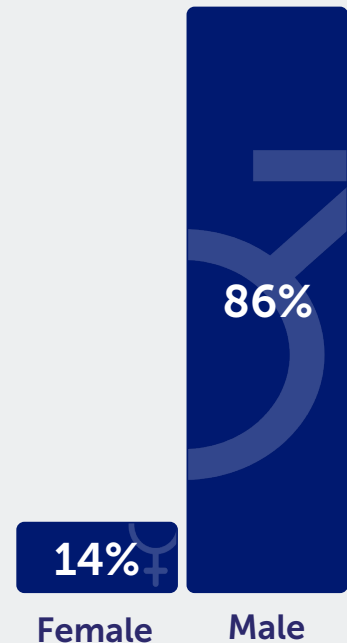
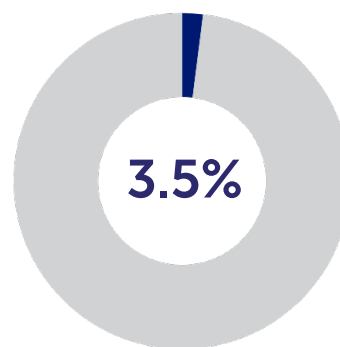
White



Black



Other



The female population has increased by 5.4 percentage points from the previous fiscal year (8.7% to 14.1%).

The treatment needs of newly committed youth throughout the Division of Youth Services continues to increase in complexity. The last two fiscal years have the highest percentage of youth requiring mental health and substance use treatment (co-occurring treatment needs) when comparing the previous 17 years of data.



Have co-occurring treatment needs (both mental health and substance abuse). This is an eight percentage point increase since FY23.



Require formal mental health intervention services. This is a seven percentage point increase since FY23 and a 20 percentage point increase since FY21.



Require treatment level services for substance abuse. This is a three percentage point increase over FY23.

Population Review

Parole Youth Services



272

Number of youth served

The Juvenile Parole Board consists of nine members appointed by the Governor, representing diverse sectors such as human services, education, public safety, labor and employment, as well as a local elected official and four public members. The Board holds the authority to grant, deny, defer, suspend, revoke or modify parole conditions. According to state law, all committed youth must complete a mandatory six-month parole period, with some cases qualifying for extensions of up to 15 months based on specific criteria.

Each committed youth is assigned a Client Manager/Parole Officer who collaborates with the youth, their family, treatment providers and community partners to deliver personalized case management and ensure tailored support throughout their supervision.



6.9 months

Average length of service



95.7

Average daily population
(41.6% reduction since 2021)



Restorative Community Justice & Community Volunteering

Restorative Community Justice (RCJ) offers youth the chance to repair harm caused to victims and their community. It emphasizes positive youth outcomes, accountability, and the restoration of individuals and relationships affected by crime whenever possible.

RCJ activities include accountability and apology letters, restorative circles, conferencing, psychoeducational classes, restorative accountability practices, dialogue and mediation sessions, structured community and individual restorative projects, victim impact panels, victim awareness programs and youth-led panels.

Spring Creek Youth Gives Back to Community



A youth from Spring Creek Youth Services Center participated in an RCJ project with Concrete Couch, a community organization offering outreach through art, construction and welding. The youth learned construction skills and table saw operation while helping build the frame for an outdoor woodworking studio. The process begins with a connection circle and introduction activity, followed by small teams of community members working together. This fosters positive social networks and helps youth gain skills. They can apply these skills in the workforce after leaving DYS while also giving back to the community that was harmed.

RCJ Project on the Campus at Mount View

A youth from Betty K. Marler Youth Services Center was able to complete an RCJ project in the community. The youth and his Behavioral Health staff member went to the Denver Rescue Mission and were able to serve men located at The Crossing who are involved in the New Life Program. The program has up to 100 rooms for families with children, bible studies, case management, counseling and meals. When the youth was asked what it meant to him to complete this project, he stated "It was nice to give back to the community and learn firsthand how to repair the harm I've caused to my community."



11,608

Hours of restorative practices service delivery

2,153

Restorative practices sessions

17,549

Youth experiences involving multiple practices events

Treatment Model & Service Delivery

DYS prioritizes a holistic approach to youth care, addressing individual and organizational factors to support recovery and success. The Division employs a trauma-responsive model, utilizing developmentally relevant strategies such as building skills through mindfulness, emotion regulation, distress tolerance and interpersonal effectiveness to foster a safe and empowering environment. All DYS youth centers are accredited by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care, with six of them also certified in the Sanctuary Model.

Throughout the 2024 fiscal year, each youth received direct behavioral health services Monday through Friday. Additionally, every youth participated in weekly milieu-based psychoeducation and skills-training Dialectical Behavior Therapy groups, a therapeutic approach designed to help individuals understand the impact of thoughts on emotions and behaviors, particularly for those experiencing intense emotional responses. It is unique in its structured approach, blending validation of youths' lived experiences with actionable skills to promote emotional and relational resilience.

Youth also benefit from comprehensive, full-time programming, totaling 12-14 hours each day. The Division's integrated treatment and service delivery model spans across the detention and commitment continuum. Services are appropriately structured in each environment to accommodate short and long-term stays with the goal of decreasing risk; addressing needs; enhancing intrinsic motivation and physical, emotional, psychological, social and moral safety; and inspiring hope for the future.

Total treatment hours

43,203

Treatment hours provided
(individual, group and family
sessions)

Individual - 10,167
Group - 30,685
Family - 2,352

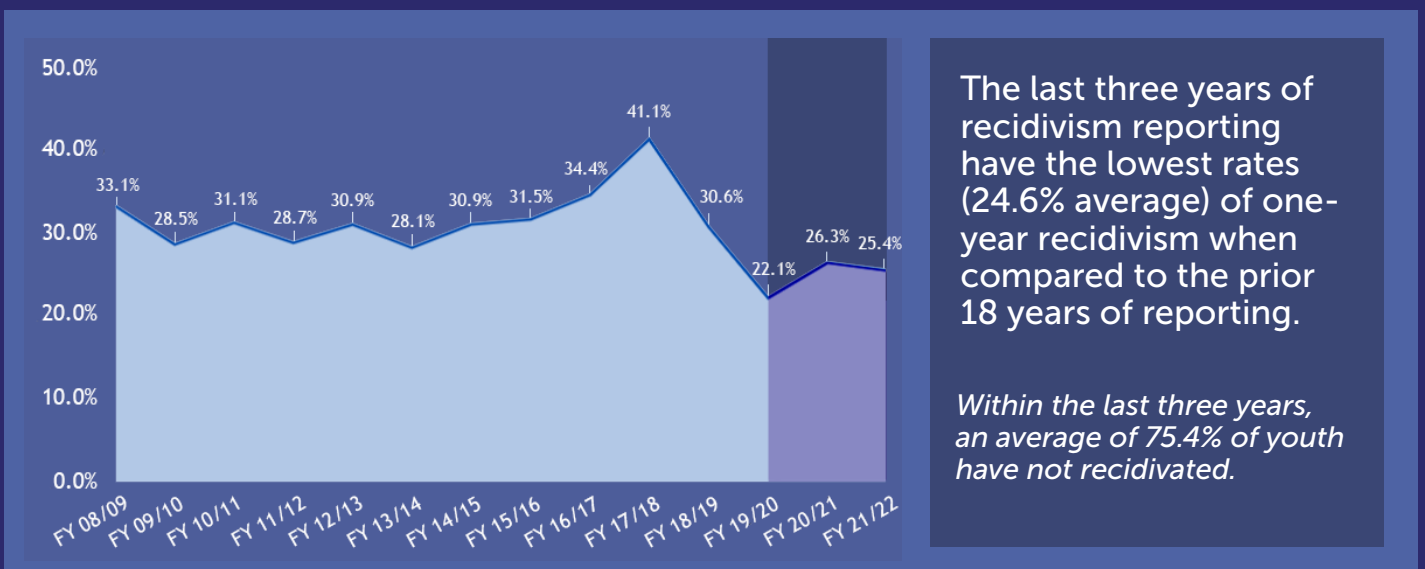
Sanctuary Model certified
locations

10

Recidivism

Annually, on July 1, the Colorado Department of Human Services publishes the results of a comprehensive analysis and review of juvenile recidivism for committed youth discharged from the Division of Youth Services in the preceding fiscal years. The July 2024 publication marked the 32nd edition of the annual recidivism report.

Colorado uses the definition and research methods endorsed by the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA) which has been adopted by an increasing number of states which measure recidivism.



The July 2024 publication showed a decrease in one-year recidivism (**26.3% to 25.4%**) in the youth group from FY21 to FY22.

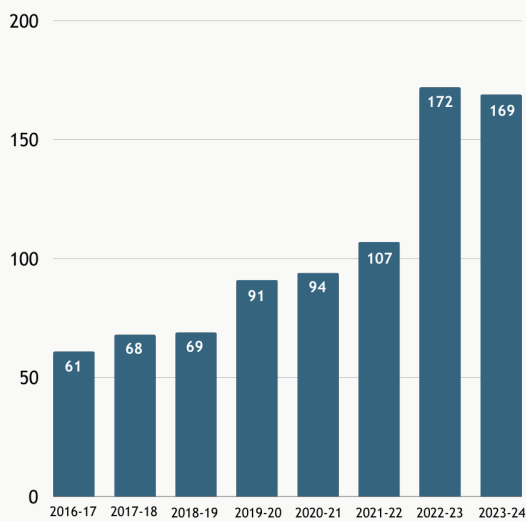
The latest report, highlights the lowest two-year (39.2%) and three-year (48.5%) recidivism rates that the DYS has observed in the past decade.



Observations: Colorado Juvenile Trends

Upon reviewing the data for this year's report, several key trends became evident. This section highlights these significant points, offering a consolidated overview of the overall shift in patterns.

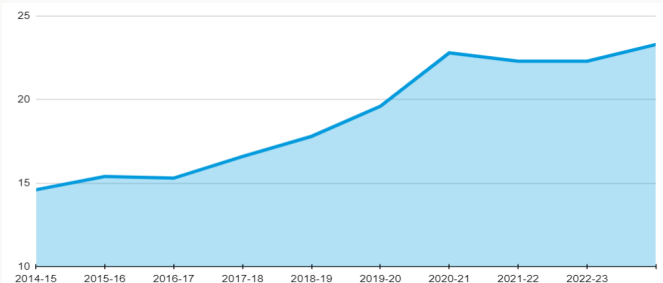
Number of unique clients admitted to detention for homicide/manslaughter related charges



41.2%

The percentage of new detention admissions with a violent charge (1,191)

Detention length-of-stay trends



Detention length of stay has increased 60% in the last 10 years. Youth on average spend 9 days longer than they did a decade ago.

Youth charged with homicide-related offenses can spend upwards of 2-3 years in detention awaiting the court process.

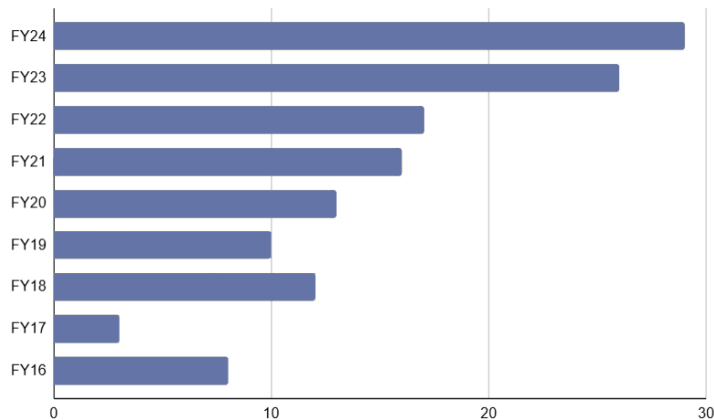
On the average day in FY24, there were 51 youth held in detention on homicide or manslaughter charges. This is an increase of **36 youth** when compared to FY17, which averaged 15 detained youth each day.



After six consecutive years of decline, detention admissions have surged 26% when compared to FY21. This upward trend is mirrored by increases in detention screens, detention average daily population, and daily maximum counts, with all indicators expected to continue rising in fiscal year 2025.

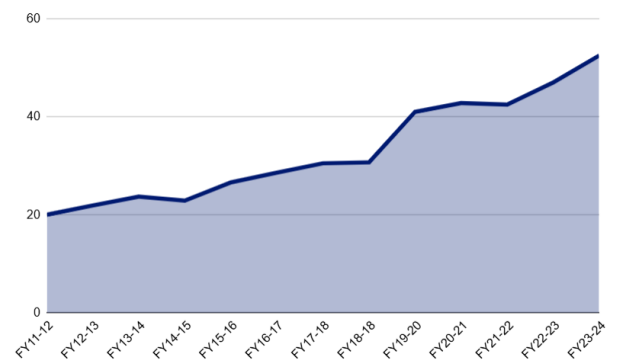
Colorado Juvenile Trends

Number of new commitments for homicide/manslaughter by FY



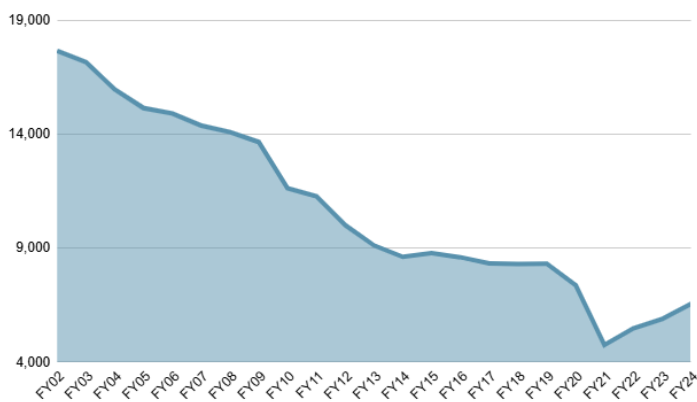
There has been an 11.5% increase in the number of committed clients for homicide/manslaughter from FY23 (26) to FY24 (29). There has been an 81.3% increase since FY21 (16)

Percentage of new commitments with violent committing offenses



There has been a 5.5 percentage point increase of new commitments with violent offenses since FY23, and a 9.7 percentage point increase since FY21.

Juvenile delinquency filing trends



Juvenile crime in Colorado had been on a steady decline, with juvenile delinquency filings dropping by 73% from FY02 to FY21. However, since 2021, this downward trend has reversed, with these filings increasing 38% since FY21 (4,753 to 6,561).



Education Services

DYS provides continuous educational services to youth placed under CDHS at seven state-operated secure commitment centers. These programs are designed to address the varied needs of students, offering both general and special education support. With a wide range of educational opportunities, the programs focus on helping youth achieve their academic goals, whether earning a high school diploma, obtaining a GED certificate, or pursuing career and technical education and training that aligns with their unique pathways to success.

88.1%

Percentage of eligible youth attained their high school diploma or GED certificate prior to discharge. 62.4% of youth met age and other criteria to pursue a diploma.

65.8%

Percentage of youth who have obtained certification or participated in various Career and Technical Education (CTE) classes.

26

The number of youth who have pursued post-secondary education opportunities while in DYS, specifically enrolling in college courses. This is a 52.9% increase from FY23 (17 youth).

37.6%

The percentage of youth requiring an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This is an 8.7 percentage point increase from FY23 where 28.9% of youth required an IEP.



Youth Graduates Achieve Milestones

Throughout the year, youth within the Division of Youth Services achieve remarkable milestones, celebrating their educational achievements. This photo highlights a graduation ceremony at the Campus at Mount View, where nine youth marked a significant step forward in their journeys. These ceremonies occur statewide each year and bring together graduates and their families, creating a moment of unity and celebration. Each graduation is a testament to the resilience and determination of the youth, who overcame challenges to reach this pivotal point, embodying the spirit of perseverance and hope for brighter futures.

Career and Technical Education Class at Grand Mesa

Grand Mesa Youth Services Center is piloting a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) program that will further prepare youth to step into employment in the food service industry when they are released or to step into a culinary degree program if they wish to go further down the road of culinary education. The photo to the right showcases the delicious creamy fettuccine with shrimp, roasted red pepper, spinach, and a parmesan cream sauce, which was created by the pilot youth for the new CTE curriculum.



Youth Earn Welding Certifications

Youth at Willow Point Youth Services Center had the opportunity to participate in a post-secondary program to earn a professional welding certification. Utilizing a state-of-the-art mobile welding lab, the program provides hands-on instruction and testing, equipping participants with the skills needed for entry-level welding positions and apprenticeships. Over a rigorous four-week course, followed by supplemental testing, the youth develop expertise in four types of welding. Their enthusiasm for learning, pride in earning their certifications, and eagerness to further their education highlight the program's impact and ability to open doors to future career opportunities.

DYS Culture in Action Stories

The Grand Mesa YSC Adventure Club Has Returned

The Grand Mesa Adventure Club is back! Led by YSSI Kassidy Makurat, the youth and staff from Grand Mesa Youth Services Center and the Western Region Office hit the road for the Storm King Hike in Glenwood Springs. The youth tackled steep inclines as they learned about the Storm King Fire. Once they reached the summit, the youth enjoyed a picnic lunch and visited the memorials of the 14 fallen firefighters, taking in the gravity of the experience while paying tribute to those who lost their lives. The youth were joined by youth center staff, education staff, and regional staff, and were able to strengthen their professional relationships out in the community.



Dog Training at Grand Mesa Youth Services Center

Youth at Grand Mesa Youth Services Center have embarked on an exciting new four-week dog training program in partnership with Mesa County. In this program, participants work directly with a certified trainer, guiding dogs through new commands and behaviors while learning valuable skills themselves. The trainer administers a series of tests that the youth must pass to earn their certificate. Integrating the seven commitments of Sanctuary into the training sessions has enriched the experience and linked it with youth treatment around safety, recovery from adversity, and creating a trauma-informed community. Every participant receives a certificate and a commemorative t-shirt upon completion. Notably, every dog in the program, including (from left to right) Karma, Ezme, Cedric, and Apollo from this year's session, has been successfully adopted through Mesa County Animal Services Shelter after passing certification testing alongside their trainers.





Broncos Player Highlighted for Work with DYS Youth Center

At the start of 2024, Denver Broncos offensive lineman Garrett Bolles was honored as the team's nominee for the prestigious Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award. Bolles has made a lasting impact through his consistent and heartfelt mentorship at Marvin W. Foote Youth Services Center (MWFYSC) and within Arapahoe County. During one of his visits to MWFYSC, the youth and staff surprised him with a heartfelt letter expressing his profound influence on their lives and celebrating his nomination. "I do this because I genuinely love and care for these kids. I know they said I help them, but they help me," Bolles reflected in a shared video. The youth and staff at MWFYSC deeply appreciate his ongoing partnership and the inspiration he brings to their community.



Youth Reflects on Skills Learned at Spring Creek YSC

A youth shared his perspective on skills and lessons learned while at Spring Creek Youth Services Center:

"I learned how to play basketball during my time at Spring Creek and I have made it a hobby of mine. I've recently been set up to play organized basketball with a local program. It's been an excellent opportunity for many reasons. It helps my basketball skills as a player and a teammate. I'm also reintegrating with positive people to surround myself with, but what makes me feel better about it is it makes myself and my family at home happy!"



Special Guest at Zebulon Pike

Zebulon Pike Youth Services Center continues to inspire youth through its popular running program, influenced by the documentary "26.2 to Life". The film highlights a running club at San Quentin Prison and the transformative journeys of its members. The youth at the center had the opportunity to hear from Markelle Taylor, also known as Markelle the Gazelle, whose story is featured in the documentary. Released in March 2019, Markelle has returned to San Quentin as a running coach and mentor, sharing the invaluable life skills he developed during his incarceration. He emphasized how the discipline he built through running helped him change his mindset, ultimately leading to his release on parole. Markelle's powerful message about personal growth and positive transformation deeply resonated with the youth and inspired the addition of running clubs at several youth centers.



RCJ Project on the Campus at Mount View

On the Campus at Mount View, youth, staff and community partners worked together to develop, create and deliver an impressive wall mural. This mural is one of many that have taken place across the Denver metro area over the past 15 years.

This mural, which is titled "Through the Storm," represents a crossroad for each youth, illustrates the ability to grow and change, and highlights the fact that there is a way out of the storm. Each youth involved in this RCJ project processed and learned through the complexities of effective teamwork, leadership, mural design and personal reflection.



Ramadan at Spring Creek Youth Services Center

Youth at Spring Creek Youth Services Center observing Ramadan had the unique opportunity to engage with Mohanad Qanabar, who shared his knowledge and personal experiences of Islam. During his visit, Mr. Qanabar introduced the youth to Islam's teachings, explaining Ramadan's traditions and customs and guiding them on how to pray. His time with the youth fostered a deeper understanding of the significance of fasting and spiritual reflection. To celebrate the completion of fasting during Ramadan, the youth enjoyed a memorable feast. The center is excited to partner with Mr. Qanabar to establish an Islamic study group, providing ongoing learning and spiritual growth opportunities.



Creative, Engaging and Captivating Dancing

Youth at the Rocky Mountain Youth Services Center dedicated themselves this past summer to creating a dynamic and captivating dance performance. As part of their Life Skills Programming, the process also emphasized public speaking and presentation skills, teaching participants how to engage an audience with confidence and clear articulation. Through practice and perseverance, the youth developed their ability to captivate and connect with a crowd, both on and off the stage. Their hard work culminated in an end-of-summer showcase, where they performed in front of an enthusiastic audience of fellow youth and staff, celebrating their growth and accomplishments.



Sanctuary Garden Growing Season Wraps Up

The Sanctuary Garden at Marvin W. Foote Youth Services Center celebrated a successful and vibrant growing season. With teamwork and dedication, the staff and youth cultivated an array of plants, including flowers, strawberries, watermelon, herbs, cucumbers, peppers, and marigolds, the latter featured prominently in their Day of the Dead garden. Throughout the summer and early fall, youth and staff worked together on the garden's upkeep, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose. Many youth shared how peaceful and fulfilled they felt while spending time in the garden, often describing it as a therapeutic escape. A survey conducted at the end of the season revealed that a significant number of youth valued the experience, noting that it positively impacted their overall well-being. This feedback has further solidified the garden's importance as a part of the center's programming.

Field Day at the Campus at Lookout Mountain

The Campus at Lookout Mountain's student council planned out a festival for Dia de los Muertos. The holiday honors deceased loved ones and celebrates the connection between life and death.

The festival had three different inflatables for youth such as a slide-through obstacle course, an inflatable wrecking ball and an inflatable rodeo horse. Youth were able to interact with a petting zoo that included a small donkey, llama, goats and a mini horse. Each group of youth also participated in a basketball tournament, a sugar skull coloring contest, an opportunity to hit a piñata, and assisted with decorating the campus for the event. In between events youth were provided street tacos, elote and Mexican sweets that were made by the Hilltop Career and Technical Education program.



Youth Success Stories

From Trouble to Triumph: Truman's Story

Truman's transformation is a story of resilience and determination. Once caught in a cycle of substance abuse and self-destructive behavior, Truman is now a role model of perseverance and a testament to the impact of the Grand Mesa Youth Services Center (GMYSC).

At 14, Truman began getting into trouble, with his first arrest marking a turbulent period. Substance abuse and disregard for authority led to multiple detentions at GMYSC, culminating in his commitment to DYS at 17.

Truman's turning point came at GMYSC when he read "The Magic", a book on gratitude. This, combined with support from GMYSC staff, sparked self-reflection and hope. The structured environment helped him maintain sobriety and become a positive influence, including teaching guitar lessons to his peers.

The Transition Program at GMYSC prepared Truman for life after release. Working outside the facility fostered self-discipline and responsibility, allowing him pay his entire restitution before parole.

Now, Truman has stable housing, a full-time job, and plays in his band. Music remains a cornerstone of his life, and he dreams of touring while supporting his family.

Truman credits GMYSC for providing the structure and opportunities to turn his life around. His story is a reminder that with the right support, change is always possible.



From Rebuilding to Thriving: Nathan's Success Story



Nathan's journey exemplifies the power of accountability, hard work, and determination to overcome challenges. Once engaged in high-risk behaviors, he has turned his life around and achieved extraordinary milestones at a young age.

Committed to DYS for 12 months, Nathan's biggest challenge was addressing his substance use. With support from his counselor and the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), Nathan confronted his struggles head-on and achieved sobriety. He also developed a reputation for being a hard worker, excelling both at a tire shop and within a community-based residential program.

While in a community program, Nathan saved enough money to pay all of his court fines, and earned early parole in February 2024 to reside with his family. He then began working at a body shop where he had prior experience and earned recognition as a skilled technician. In September 2024, he put a down payment on his first home—an incredible accomplishment in Denver’s competitive housing market at just 19 years old.

Nathan’s sobriety remains strong, and he continues to work full-time alongside his father. His goal is to excel further in his career as a body shop technician while maintaining financial independence. Nathan’s parents have been steadfast in their support, contributing to his remarkable turnaround.

Nathan’s transformation from high-risk behavior to homeowner and skilled professional demonstrates the impact of determination and a supportive environment. His journey serves as an inspiring example of how young people can overcome adversity and achieve success.

Breaking Barriers: Miranda’s Path to Success



Miranda’s story is a testament to how hard work and determination can turn a life around. Once caught in a cycle of criminal behavior, she has transformed into a strong, independent young adult ready to give back to her community.

Initially placed into a community program, Miranda’s struggles led to her escape and subsequent re-commitment and placement into a secure center in DYS. At the Betty K. Marler Youth Services Center, she addressed her past through therapy with Bri Weise and mentorship from Micah Atkins, helping her engage in treatment and personal growth.

Miranda earned her high school diploma, participated in welding and cosmetology programs, and excelled in college courses. She is currently enrolled in her second online course through Colorado State University-Pueblo, earning an A in her first course. She successfully completed her first semester at the Community College of Denver and is registered for her second semester beginning in January.

In 2024, Miranda transitioned to the Third Way Center’s Lincoln Apartments, and received a housing voucher to live independently in an apartment. She remains engaged in treatment, excels in college courses, and holds a work-study position. Her future plans include securing full-time employment, and earning a bachelor’s degree to help troubled youth.

Miranda’s progress has led to consideration for early parole. Her journey highlights the power of resilience and the importance of supportive environments. Miranda has moved beyond her troubled past, building a future filled with promise and purpose.



Lorenzo's Journey: Overcoming Challenges and Building a Bright Future

Lorenzo's early life was marked by struggles, including childhood turmoil, substance use, and encounters with the justice system. Before his commitment, he spent a year in the Mesa County Detention Center and faced difficulties adjusting to the Grand Mesa Youth Services Center (GMYSC). He had several altercations and expressed a desire to be in county jail rather than at GMYSC. However, over time, he worked hard in therapy and shifted his mindset, realizing that he had an opportunity to turn his life around.

Lorenzo focused on improving his physical and mental health. He began exercising, lost weight, and eliminated health complications. He also became the first in his family to earn a high school diploma and achieved several certifications. Lorenzo's hard work earned him a high-level status, though as an Aggravated Juvenile Offender (AJO), he wasn't allowed the same privileges as others with the status. Despite this, he remained focused on his goals and made significant progress.

In January 2024, Lorenzo's hard work paid off when his sentence was converted to Community Corrections. Since then, he has obtained full-time employment with a tile company, maintained a clean record and has not received any write-ups. He has also been approved for non-residential status, meaning he will complete his sentence while living independently.

Lorenzo credits Pershial Jackson, his Behavioral Health Specialist, for helping him release frustration and stay focused. "My time in DYS at first was tough because I would say I still had a lot of stuff built up, but over time working with Pershial Jackson, I was able to figure out how to release frustration like from working out and reading." Reflecting on his future, Lorenzo said, "My goal for the future now that I am out is to stick with the trade I have gotten into or something around this line of work so I can further expand my knowledge and start a business one day."

Jesus' Journey: Growth, Mentorship, and Commitment to Family

Jesus' journey is a powerful example of personal growth and redemption. After mistakes in his youth, he was committed to DYS in 2020. Since then, he has worked hard to improve himself, focusing on treatment and living with integrity. As an older youth, Jesus has become a mentor and positive influence, earning the respect of both peers and staff.



In 2024, Jesus transferred to a community placement and secured full-time employment at a tire shop. He uses his earnings to support his family and assist with his father's construction company, where he contributes by offering bids in Spanish. Jesus is eager to dedicate his full efforts to the family business.

While at DYS, Jesus also participated in the University of Denver Unchained Voices 2024 Art Show, showcasing his art at the Boulder Library. He is grateful for his opportunities and continues to work hard. Over the past year and a half, he has maintained a clean record, earned enough money to help his family while committed, and successfully mentored other DYS youth.

Jesus' story is one of resilience, showing that it's possible to turn one's life around with the right mindset and support. He looks forward to continuing to support his family and career and is excited about the future.

From Struggle to Success: Jovanni's Journey



Jovanni's story is a powerful testament to resilience, personal growth, and the transformative power of unwavering support. Entering the Division of Youth Services (DYS) at just 14 years old, Jovanni initially resisted the structure and expectations of the program. His early years in DYS were marked by defiance, rule-breaking, and contributing to a negative environment. It seemed as though change was out of reach.

However, during his final commitment at Golden Peak Youth Services Center, Jovanni began to reevaluate his life and aspirations. "I just wanted to be like big

baller status... I used to want a big house and a bunch of whips," he admitted. "I don't want that anymore. I want a little house and a car." This shift in perspective marked the beginning of his transformation.

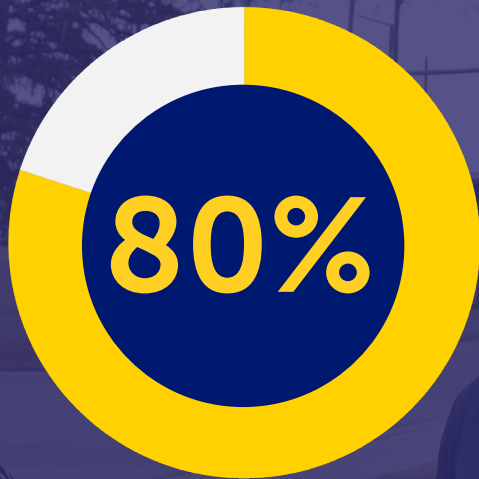
With the support of his counselor and Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), Jovanni worked through his challenges and achieved remarkable milestones. He earned his high school diploma, completed treatment, and maintained sobriety for over a year. He returned to his girlfriend and

young daughter, resumed his construction job, and saved money for a house. Giovanni now enjoys stability, living in his own apartment and celebrating life's milestones with his family.

Reflecting on his journey, Giovanni credits the people who stood by him during his darkest times. "The things that helped me the most was the support I received from within my team. I had a group of people around me who refused to give up on me, even when I wouldn't listen," he shared. "It's because of people like you guys that kids like me get another chance at life... I could never repay what has been given to me."



DYS Fiscal Year 2024 Financial Review



The percentage of the budget spent on direct care and services to youth (education, residential placement, behavioral health and medical services)

Expenditures by Category

10%

Colorado Youth
Detention Continuum

5%

Client Management

2%

Parole and Transition

1%

Boulder Impact

2%

Director's Office /
Administration

Thank you.

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Data Resources

Colorado Department of Human Services. (2024). DYS Publication and Reports: DYS Statistical Report, Monthly Population Report, Education Outcomes Evaluations, and Recidivism Evaluation. Retrieved from <https://cdhs.colorado.gov/division-of-youth-services-publications-and-reports>

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Division of Youth Services
Office of Children, Youth & Families

