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of **ALASKA**  
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January 26, 2017

The Honorable Pete Kelly, President  
Alaska Senate  
State Capitol Room 111  
Juneau, AK 99801

The Honorable Bryce Edgmon, Speaker  
Alaska House of Representatives  
State Capitol Room 208  
Juneau, AK 99801

Subject: SB 74 (2016) Division of Juvenile Justice Privatization Feasibility Study

Pursuant to Senate Bill 74 (2016) the Department procured a study to analyze the feasibility of privatizing select facilities of the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The Department contracted with Carter Goble Lee, Inc. through a competitive solicitation process to conduct the feasibility study. The contractor's final report is enclosed.

This study had two aims, the first of which was to determine whether there was a local community, tribal, or health system entity that was willing and able to provide detention services for arrested juveniles. The second purpose was to explore local interest in operating alternative social service programs in the current facilities in lieu of juvenile detention programs. The contractors found that neither option is viable given the lack of expertise, high risk and costs involved.

The Department's responses to the consultant's recommendations are as follows:

**Recommendation 1: The State of Alaska should not pursue privatization of its short-term detention facilities for juveniles.**

**Response:** The Department agrees that privatization of these facilities is not viable given the specialized skills necessary, risk, costs, and lack of contractors interested in the operation of the short-term juvenile detention facilities. The contract team interviewed social service stakeholders, tribal providers and health care organizations, and concluded that, "There are no private organizations...with either the interest or capability to operate short-term detention facilities. Privatization of these facilities is not feasible."

Community support for maintaining current State operations is significant. Further, the study found that current facility programming within the detention facilities reflects an “exceptional array of programs given their size and are supported by active community participation”.

The study further notes that the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 2013 data indicates privatization of secure juvenile detention facilities is highly uncommon; only 8% of juveniles are held in private secure detention facilities nationally.

**Recommendation 2: The State of Alaska should continue to operate the Kenai, Mat-Su, and Nome Youth facilities in their current function. These facilities provide substantial value to the state juvenile system and their local communities. Their highest and best use is in the continued operation as detention facilities.**

**Response:** The Department agrees that these facilities are well-operated, in large part due to knowledgeable and committed staff, and are vital components in direct support of the Division’s mission to hold juvenile’s accountable for their behavior, promote the safety and restoration of victims and communities, and assist offenders and their families in developing the skills to prevent crime. Further, it is well established that youth served closer to home are more likely to have better outcomes.

An evaluation of the external factors that influence the decision to continue operation of individual facilities, such as budget factors, were not within the scope of this study. The Legislature removed a large portion of funding for the Nome Youth Facility from the FY2017 base operating budget and appropriated one-year funding. The FY2018 Governor’s budget request does not include a budget increment to keep the facility operating beyond FY2017.

**Recommendation 3: The Division of Juvenile Justice should develop a housing and treatment program for adjudicated delinquents with long-term treatment needs at the Nome Youth Facility. The program would provide a needed placement alternative for youth that are difficult to manage in the current system at little or no additional cost to the state.**

**Response:** The Department agrees that development of a specialized program at the Nome Youth Facility for adjudicated youth would contribute to the Division’s mission, provide an opportunity for increased utilization of this facility, and may improve outcomes for some youth. The Department will begin evaluating the potential for such a program in consultation with stakeholders and with consideration of the current Legislative budget process.

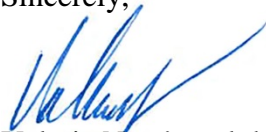
**Recommendation 4: The Division of Juvenile Justice should develop a comprehensive plan for mental health service delivery in detention facilities that defines service objectives, establishes specific strategies for the achievement of these objectives, and measures system performance.**

**Response:** The Department agrees that policy and guidance documents are necessary to support the mental health services available to residents of the division's detention facilities. While short-term detention facilities are not appropriate venues for a complete array of mental health services due to the short length of stay and pre-adjudication status, forthcoming mental health policies will address delivery of crisis intervention services, substance abuse education, skill building, and referral to community services upon release. These will complement the existing extensive mental health and suicide risk screening policies currently in place.

Additionally the Division participates in the national Performance-based Standards (PbS) system. PbS is a nationally recognized ongoing quality assurance system that has established research based standards for juvenile justice agencies and facilities. All of the detention facilities reviewed in this report meet industry benchmarks for behavioral health outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the privatization feasibility study and the Department's conclusions based on this study. Please contact Director Rob Wood if you have any questions related to this study or the Department's juvenile justice programs. Director Wood may be reached at 261-4388 or rob.wood@alaska.gov.

Sincerely,



Valerie Nurr'araaluk Davidson  
Commissioner

CC: Darwin Peterson, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor  
Pat Pitney, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Enclosure: Feasibility Study for the Privatization of Alaska Juvenile Justice Facilities; Carter Goble Lee (CGL), January 2017.



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# FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE PRIVATIZATION OF ALASKA JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES

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JANUARY 2017

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# **FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR THE PRIVATIZATION OF ALASKA JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES**

January 2017

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the course of this project, Department of Health and Social Services officials and staff were extremely cooperative and generous with their time. Without the assistance of these professionals in providing data and explaining operations, the analysis contained in this report would not have been possible. Their openness and candid perceptions of juvenile justice system issues made a major contribution to this report. Finally, we owe a special thanks to Barbara Murray, the Department's Project Manager, who provided critical support to the project team in answering questions, arranging meetings, and responding to our requests for data.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senate Bill 74, signed into law in June 2016, directed the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to procure a study analyzing the feasibility of privatizing select facilities of the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The Department selected the Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility, the Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility<sup>1</sup>, the Mat-Su Youth Facility, and the Nome Youth Facility as the subjects of this study, and contracted with CGL to conduct the project. A summary of the analysis, findings, and recommendations follows.

### Privatization

The primary purpose of this review was to assess the feasibility of privatizing select Division of Juvenile Justice facilities in a way that would preserve overall service quality, but achieve cost savings. With the assistance of the Division, the project team sought out and interviewed social service, tribal, and health care organizations in each detention facility's service area to determine the degree of interest and management capability of local organizations in assuming operational responsibility for these facilities. In each area, we made follow-up inquiries as to the presence of any local groups or organizations that might have potential interest in developing an operational agreement with Division of Juvenile Justice to assume some level of authority over facility operations.

Despite these activities we were unable to identify organizations in any of these communities that exhibited a willingness to assume responsibility for the operation of these facilities. Given the absence of any organizations with an interest in privatization, the concept is clearly not feasible at this time.

### **Recommendation 1: The State of Alaska should not pursue privatization of its short-term detention facilities for juveniles.**

The absence of interest in privatization of the current operation of the short-term detention facilities was attributable to the following factors:

- **Lack of expertise** – Most organizations contacted viewed detention management as highly specialized, requiring a degree of expertise in security systems and behavioral management that they did not possess and would have difficulty acquiring.
- **Risk** – the potential legal liability for managing the safety and security of detained youth was a major disincentive. Expensive liability insurance, if it could be acquired, would be a prerequisite for any organization entering into this field.
- **Cost** – The operation of the facilities, particularly startup, staff costs, and facility upkeep, were seen as major financial challenges to organizations that generally lacked the deep financial resources or access to financing that would be required to take on the operation of these facilities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility was subsequently closed in September 2016. A review of the impact of the closure and the potential for repurposing the facility is included in this report.



- **Relationship with Division of Juvenile Justice** – All organizations contacted had deep respect for the current performance of Division of Juvenile Justice in managing these facilities and their relationship with each community. All indicated that the best option for the community would be for continued operation of the facilities by Division of Juvenile Justice.

## Alternative Use

We also assessed the potential for each facility to be repurposed and the associated impact of the loss of short-term detention beds to the local community. Our analysis showed substantial benefits provided by the current operation of these facilities and no interest in repurposing them to an alternative function.

**Recommendation 2: The State of Alaska should continue to operate the Kenai, Mat-Su, and Nome Youth facilities in their current function. These facilities provide substantial value to the state juvenile justice system and their local communities. Their highest and best use is in continued operation as detention facilities.**

Benefits provided by the current operation of these facilities included

- **Location.** The Kenai and Nome facilities are located in large geographic service areas with many remote communities. They provide the only available juvenile detention resources that can be readily utilized in these areas. These communities place great value in having a facility that allowed detention of youth in a local setting.
- **Public Safety.** Access to local detention facilities allows law enforcement to maintain a more active community presence by avoiding time-consuming transports of youth to distant facilities.
- **Conducive to Local Youth.** The Kenai and Nome facilities provide a more appropriate detention placement for youth that would not adjust well to a larger, more urban setting in Anchorage. The population served by Nome is largely Alaska Native. These youths are typically from rural villages and have distinct cultural and social needs that need to be accommodated in order to address rehabilitation or treatment needs. Effective treatment of these youth requires staff with a high degree of cultural competency, appropriate programming, and a supportive living environment. Nome Youth Facility is by far the facility that can most effectively meet the needs of these youth. The Kenai facility also serves youths from small towns and rural areas with backgrounds and needs that are often quite different from youth population in the Anchorage metropolitan area.
- **Operational Performance.** All facilities provide high-quality detention and program services for youth that meet or exceed contemporary professional standards.
- **Placement Alternative for Youth with Adjustment Issues.** The Division places adjudicated youth in treatment as well as youth in detention that experience difficulty in institutional adjustment at Kenai. The small setting, operational style, and experience of the staff has proven to be an effective option in treating these youths.



- **Quality Work Force.** The staff at all facilities appear well-trained, highly professional, and committed to positive interaction with detained youth. Staff turnover is very low.
- **Probation.** These facilities provide office space for the probation staff which permits close working relationships between probation and facility staff.
- **Facility Design.** Kenai and Mat-Su are very well-designed facilities that provide an outstanding environment for short-term youth detention. There is capacity to expand if needed in the future.
- **Increasing Demand for Services.** Already operating at near 79 percent of capacity, the Mat-Su facility faces growing demand for services. It is located in a high population growth area, particularly in the at-risk youth age group that is the program's target population. Enrollment in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District grew by more than 500 students for the 2015-2016 school year<sup>2</sup>

In terms of repurposing alternatives, the proximity of Mat-Su to the McLaughlin Youth Center in Anchorage raises the possibility of relocating its residents to McLaughlin, freeing up the facility for alternative use. Potential uses of the facility, assuming availability of funding for facility modification and program operation, include use as a Detox Center, or as a stepdown unit for youth preparing to reenter the community from McLaughlin. However, cost savings from closing Mat-Su would be relatively small due to the offsetting need for additional staff to open a currently closed unit at McLaughlin Youth Center to house transferred youth. Repurposing Mat-Su would also entail the loss of the many benefits provided by the facility, provide relatively small operational savings, and potentially create additional state expense to support programs in the repurposed facility.

Local community stakeholders in Kenai saw no potential repurposing possibilities for the facility, and instead stressed the value provided by current facility operations to the community and the youth placed there.

Nome community stakeholders also saw no realistic possibilities for repurposing the facility. Rather than repurpose the facility, one alternative is to expand its mission. This initiative would dedicate four beds at the facility for youth in long-term, post-adjudication treatment. The program would be designed specifically for youth that are difficult to place due to cognitive impairments, age of the youth (close to aging out of the juvenile justice system), or in need of transitional services appropriate to Alaskan Native communities.

**Recommendation 3: The Division of Juvenile Justice should develop a housing and treatment program for adjudicated delinquents with long-term treatment needs at the Nome Youth Facility. The program would provide a needed placement alternative for youth that are difficult to manage in the current system at little or no additional cost to the state.**

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<sup>2</sup> Hollander, Z., "Unexpected spike in student numbers maxes out Mat-Su schools," Alaska Dispatch News, August 26, 2015.



The program would provide a superior placement opportunity for youth that are from Northwest Alaska that ultimately become adjudicated delinquent, long-term committed youth. Currently these youths are housed far from their home communities in the Division's treatment facilities in Bethel, Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Juneau. The program could easily be managed with the current staffing and housing provided in Nome at no additional cost. Moreover, Nome Youth Facility is uniquely qualified for the change in mission as it already has mental health services available at the facility and a well-developed system of culturally appropriate programming.

Ketchikan community stakeholders cited negative consequences for justice system-involved youth resulting from the closure of the Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility in September 2016. These consequences include:

- **Lack of access to legal counsel.** With the relocation of the facility's residents to Juneau, meaningful and timely contact with legal counsel becomes much more difficult. This will likely result in youth remaining in detention for longer periods of time.
- **Reduced access to courts.** The local court will no longer be able to readily meet with youth in person to assess their cases and treatment needs. This in effect impairs the effectiveness of the juvenile court in addressing these cases.
- **Lack of access to family and community.** Maintaining social connections is critical to rehabilitation. The distance of Juneau from Ketchikan makes maintaining these ties problematic. Linkages to local community agencies to facilitate reentry into the community are also weakened.
- **No facilities to hold youth for trials.** In the event of trial, there are no facilities available locally to detain youth for the duration of the proceedings.
- **Diminished public safety.** The lack of a local detention alternative may result in youth that need to be detained, being left in the community as the least "bad" alternative.

The closure however, has provided an opportunity for alternative use of the facility. By terms of the agreement between the City of Ketchikan and the State, ownership of the facility has reverted to the City of Ketchikan. The City issued an RFP this past October for proposals from groups to establish alternative community programs at the facility. The City received one proposal, from Akeela, Inc., one of Alaska's oldest behavioral health treatment providers. Akeela proposes to convert the facility to a Sobering Center. Inebriates would be brought to the facility by law enforcement, medical staff, or members of the community. At the facility they will receive assessment, monitoring, and potentially referral for follow-up services at Akeela's substance abuse treatment facility in Ketchikan, Horizon House. The facility would essentially provide a safe environment for impaired persons to sober up, and establish a means to identify persons in need of follow-up treatment services.





## System Overview

The Division currently has a total of 106 short-term detention beds. Of the Division's total detention capacity, 67 beds are located at the state's four youth detention/treatment centers located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Bethel, and Juneau. These facilities also operate 118 treatment beds for adjudicated youth. The three short-term youth detention facilities (Mat-Su, Kenai, and Nome) provide a total of 39 short-term detention beds.

Declining detention facility utilization is a function of large drops in juvenile crime and referrals to the juvenile justice system. Over the last twenty years, violent juvenile crime rates have fallen by over 50 percent nationally.<sup>3</sup> The pattern of referrals to the Division of Juvenile Justice for juvenile crimes in Alaska is consistent with this trend. The number of unduplicated juveniles and overall referrals to the Division of Juvenile Justice have both fallen by 49 and 50 percent respectively over the last ten years, while the number of charges filed has fallen by 48 percent. The rate of decline is consistent across felony and misdemeanor crime classes, as well as categories, such as property crimes and crimes against persons. The average daily population of youth in short-term detention declined by 29 percent over this same period. Most of this drop occurred prior to 2013. The detention population has been largely stable over the past three years.

Use of privatization nationally in juvenile justice has primarily targeted non-secure, treatment-oriented community facilities managed by non-profit social service organizations. In the United States, 78 percent of group homes are private, and most hold 10 or fewer residents. Most shelters, wilderness camps, and residential treatment centers for juveniles are also privately operated.<sup>4</sup> Youth in Alaska under the supervision of the Division of Juvenile Justice are also commonly placed in community residential facilities. The vast majority of these placements are implemented as alternatives to detention or after a delinquency adjudication. Between FY 2011 - FY 2016 the most common community-based placements were residential behavioral health treatment facilities, emergency shelters, and alcohol and drug treatment facilities.

However, the use of privatization for secure detention is much more limited. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reports that nationally, in 2013 1,488 juveniles were held in private secure detention facilities. This represents approximately 8 percent of the national population of juveniles held in secure detention.<sup>5</sup> Management of secure detention for juveniles is overwhelmingly a government-managed function throughout the United States.

## Facility Reviews

The three short-term detention facilities reviewed in this study are models with respect to their operational performance, condition, and programs for detained youth. The project team was uniformly impressed by the level of staff commitment and engagement with youth. Moreover, the Kenai and Mat-Su physical plants have outstanding designs and are well maintained.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR\\_Display.asp?ID=qa05201](http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR_Display.asp?ID=qa05201). December 13, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Hockenbury (2016).

<sup>5</sup> OJJDP, (2016) Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement.



However, these facilities are all relatively expensive, with FY 2016 operating budgets ranging from \$2.1 to \$2.8 million, and average daily costs per youth ranging from \$483 per resident per day to \$1,542.49 per resident per day. This cost is not a result of management inefficiency, but is instead a function of small facility size, lack of economies of scale, and in some cases, relatively low utilization rates. Staffing deployment at these facilities is a function of the facility layout and is largely fixed regardless of the number of youth housed at any given time. These facilities operate with two to four Juvenile Justice Officers per shift to provide security, interact with youth, and transport them to court or medical appointments as needed. This is a minimal staffing complement that cannot be reduced without substantial impairment of facility operations. Insofar as staffing makes up 90 percent of the operating cost of these facilities, operational costs are relatively inflexible, regardless of the number of youth housed in the facility. The small capacity, and in the case of Kenai and Nome, low population counts of these facilities produces these high costs per youth per day.

Other specific findings from the operational reviews include:

- Security systems at all facilities provide an adequate amount of control over the resident population.
- Facility staff appear to be dedicated, involved and enthusiastic professionals that understand the unique needs of the youth in their custody. They combine this expertise with an appropriate level of emphasis on the safety and security demands of a youth detention facility.
- Staffing patterns at all facilities are appropriate given facility layouts and operational practices.
- All facilities maintain an exceptional array of programs, given their size, and are supported by active community participation. The Nome Youth Facility is particularly notable for its comprehensive set of programs tailored to meet the unique needs of the facility's residents.

## Mental Health Services

Assuring adequate mental health services for youth in detention is a challenge for communities throughout the United States. The specific risk factors of the youth population in these facilities and the challenges posed by the limited availability of treatment providers and the logistics of accessing services in Alaska pose special challenges to the Division of Juvenile Justice in its management of youth detention. This report provides a survey of key issues faced in providing mental health services in these facilities.

**Recommendation 4: The Division of Juvenile Justice should develop a comprehensive plan for mental health service delivery in detention facilities that defines service objectives, establishes specific strategies for the achievement of these objectives, and measures system performance.**

Division of Juvenile Justice data show that in 2015, 650 youth (55.6 percent) in a survey pool of a total of 1,167 youth were identified as having a mental health diagnosis. Moreover, national data on characteristics and factors associated with suicide risk clearly indicate that youth in the Division's



detention facilities have an elevated risk of suicidal ideation.<sup>6</sup> The Division has developed a systemic approach to recognizing and managing youth at risk for suicide. The approach includes the development and implementation of a plan to address the underlying reasons for the youth's suicidal ideation, identification of treatment needs during the period of increased risk, as well as follow up interventions and monitoring strategies to reduce the risk of relapse. Division mental health clinicians, by policy, develop Safety Plans for youth on suicide status that covers the following topics: future orientation/goals; support people they can talk to; coping skills; what staff can do to relieve youth stress; personal strengths; and protective factors.

Current psychiatric resources at the three detention facilities are limited. Kenai has a contract psychiatrist that visits the facility every four to six weeks. In addition, some services are provided via tele-health. At the Nome Youth Facility, the psychiatrist visits the facility every six to eight weeks, but is available for telephone consultation as needed. A McLaughlin Youth Center mental health clinician travels to Kenai and Mat-Su weekly. Nome however is the only stand-alone detention facility with a full-time mental health clinician on staff. At the Mat-Su Youth Facility, a psychiatric nurse practitioner visits the facility monthly.

Given the magnitude of mental health service needs in the population, current Division staff resources strain to fully address the clinical requirements presented by youth admitted to detention, particularly at the Mat-Su and Kenai facilities. These facilities need access to additional, consistent staff resources to work with probation and provide mental health treatment to youth including reviews of youth requiring suicide precautions, interventions for youth requiring suicide precautions, mental health assessment and diagnosis, group therapies and treatment readiness for detained youth, and transition services.

Moreover, the Division lacks a comprehensive plan that defines mental health service objectives on a system wide basis for the short-term detention units, establishes an overall strategy to meet these objectives, and identifies measures of progress toward their attainment. A comprehensive service delivery plan should address the issues identified in this report. The plan should address system goals, strategies for service delivery, resource allocations, and performance measurement.

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<sup>6</sup>Hayes, L.M. (2004). Juvenile suicide in confinement: A national study. National Center of Institutions and Alternatives; Wasserman, G.A., Ko, S.J., & McReynolds, L.S. (August 2004). Assessing the mental health status of youth in juvenile justice settings. Juvenile Justice Bulletin, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; Daniel, A.E. (2006). Preventing suicide in prison: A collaborative responsibility of administrative, custodial, and clinical staff. Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law, 34: 165-75; Abram, K., Choe, J., Washburn, J., Teplin, L., King, D., Dulcan, M., & Bassett, E. (2014). Suicidal thoughts and behaviors among detained youth. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice; American Academy of Pediatrics. (2001). Health care for children and adolescents in the juvenile correctional care system. Pediatrics, 107(4), 799-803; Abram, K., Choe, B.A., Washburn, J., Teplin, L., King, D., Dulcan, M. (2008). Suicidal ideation and behaviors among youth in juvenile detention. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 47(3): 291-300.

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## 1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Senate Bill 74 (CHAPTER 25 SLA 16) authorized the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) to contract for a feasibility study related to the privatization of “select” juvenile justice facilities. In July 2016, the DHSS Division of Juvenile Justice selected CGL as contractor for the project. CGL worked with the Division to refine the scope and purpose of the project, which focused on assessing the potential for privatization of the state’s four stand-alone detention facilities (Mat-Su Youth Facility, Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility, Nome Youth Facility, and Ketchikan Youth Facility). The Ketchikan facility was subsequently closed on September 2016, but remained as part of the study to evaluate the impact of the closure. The final report is due to the Legislature by January 2017.

The study had three specific objectives:

- Determine the feasibility of privatizing the operation of the state’s facilities for the short-term detention of juveniles;
- Assess the value provided to the State of Alaska by these facilities in terms of their current operations and programs; and
- Identify potential alternative uses for these facilities by way of establishing their highest and best use.

### Methodology

The analysis assumed that any potential private operator of these facilities would be required to meet current Division of Juvenile Justice standards for facility safety, quality of care, and accreditation, while taking into account the distinct cultural characteristics of the communities served by the each of the different facilities.

The project team requested a large amount of data regarding program operations, service delivery, and facility conditions. We also requested detailed data on the youth population managed in these facilities, as well as performance and activity measure data, planning documents, management reports, and other documentation of operations and programs.

We supplemented this data with extensive interviews with key juvenile justice system stakeholders and program administrators. These interviews centered on internal and external perspectives on the role of the short-term detention facilities in the Alaska juvenile justice system, their overall level of performance, and the potential impact of private operation of these facilities. Interview subjects provided invaluable insight into the unique characteristics of these facilities and their relationships with the local community.

Finally, the project team conducted comprehensive on-site operational and program assessments of each of the facilities under review. These assessments addressed operational efficiency, program service delivery, and mental health treatment. These tours provided first hand exposure to the



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conditions of these facilities and the Division's approach to operations and the delivery of program services.

## 2. PRIVATIZATION FEASIBILITY

Recommendation 1: The State of Alaska should not pursue privatization of its short-term detention facilities for juveniles.

### *Key Findings*

- *There are no private organizations in the Mat-Su, Kenai, or Nome regions with either the interest or capability to operate short-term detention facilities. Privatization of these facilities is not feasible.*
- *Organizations cited lack of experience in managing detention, liability concerns, financial risk, and recognition of the high quality of current facility operations as primary factors in their lack of interest.*

### Analysis

The project team's plan for assessment of the feasibility of privatization of the operation of Mat-Su Youth Facility, Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility, and Nome Youth Facility relied upon a step-by-step analysis that examined potential privatization opportunities in terms of meeting a series of benchmark requirements. In essence our approach was to first identify those organizations that had the ability and potential interest in assuming some level of operational authority over these facilities. We would then assess their capabilities and define approaches to privatization compatible with these organizations. Finally, we would review the qualitative impacts of privatization on the rest of the Division of Juvenile Justice's system, logistics, and cost impacts. The plan included the following specific elements:

1. Identify organizations, corporations, or other government agencies that could potentially operate the short-term detention facilities reviewed in this study.
2. Prequalify potential private facility operators relative to each identified entity's related service delivery experience, availability of qualified staff, financial stability, and management infrastructure.
3. Rank order the potential viability of identified privatization entities for each facility.
4. Define the range of approaches to privatization with each identified entity, including:
  - Contracted operations with the Division of Juvenile Justice retaining ownership of facility
  - Contracted operations with the Division of Juvenile Justice leasing facility to vendor/organization
  - Contracted operations with the Division of Juvenile Justice in conjunction with sale of the facility to vendor/organization
  - Contracted operations in a vendor/organization-supplied facility





- Shared operation/ownership of current facilities with a local government/tribe in a partnership agreement
  - Partial privatization of functions or programs under continued Division of Juvenile Justice management
5. Establish the legal authority for contracting with identified entities for each of these approaches, and to the extent necessary, identify statutory or regulatory changes required for implementation.
  6. Assess the impact of each identified alternative upon overall coordination of services with juvenile probation supervision, and long-term institutional treatment. Review the degree to which each approach could be integrated into the Division of Juvenile Justice's current continuum of services without disruption or impairment of overall system functioning.
  7. Review the operational logistics associated with implementation of each of the identified alternative approaches to privatization.
  8. Assess the operational logistics associated with Division of Juvenile Justice takeover of facility operations in the event of vendor/organization failure.
  9. Identify methods for assuring service quality and holding vendor/organizations accountable under each approach to privatization identified.
  10. Review alternative approaches to assure adequate maintenance of current facilities under each of the identified alternatives.
  11. Conduct comparative analysis of identified models to establish the greatest potential for maintaining service while improving efficiency.
  12. Define mandatory staffing, program service, insurance, and operational requirements for each facility.
  13. Develop a model to project core operational, facility, and program costs to meet these requirements for each identified alternative. The model will take into account local labor markets, professional staff resource availability, and available data on identified vendor/organization cost structures.
  14. Estimate additional Division of Juvenile Justice costs for contract establishment, administration, and management.
  15. Project one-time vendor/organization start-up costs associated with assuming responsibility for operating these facilities.
  16. Prepare a comprehensive 10-year projection of costs for each identified alternative scenario.
  17. Develop a summary matrix that presents a comparative analysis of the long-range costs for each identified alternative scenario.



The obvious key prerequisite in this analysis is identification of potential organizations with the capability and motivation to assume responsibility for operating these facilities. In the absence of such organizations, the feasibility of privatization is moot.

## Conclusions

The large national operators of private correctional facilities typically seek opportunities to manage large, new facilities that they have developed in order to achieve large-scale efficiencies and economies of scale, thereby maximizing profits. Given their size, design, and location, these facilities offer very little potential for profit for these organizations. Nationally, private sector operation of secure youth detention facilities is rare.

Non-profit organizations, by contrast, are very much involved with the management of youth in the justice system. Accordingly, with the assistance of Division of Juvenile Justice administrators, we sought out and interviewed social service, tribal, and health care organizations in each detention facility's market area to determine their potential interest and organizational ability to assume operational responsibilities for these facilities. In each area, we made follow-up inquiries as to the presence of any local groups or organizations that might have any interest in developing an operational agreement with the Division of Juvenile Justice to assume some type of authority over facility operations. **Despite these activities we were unable to identify any organizations in any of these communities that exhibited a willingness to assume responsibility for the operation of these facilities. Given the absence of any organizations with an interest in privatization, the concept is clearly not feasible at this time.**

Key reasons cited for the lack of interest in privatization of the current operation of the short-term detention facilities included the following factors:

- **Lack of expertise**— Most organizations contacted viewed detention management as highly specialized, requiring a degree of expertise in security systems and behavioral management that they did not possess and would have difficulty acquiring.
- **Risk** – the potential legal liability for managing the safety and security of detained youth was a major disincentive. Expensive liability insurance, if it could be acquired, would be a prerequisite for any organization entering into this field.
- **Cost** – The operation of the facilities, particularly startup, staff costs, and facility upkeep, were seen as major financial challenges to organizations that generally lacked the deep financial resources or access to financing that would be required to take on the operation of these facilities.
- **Relationship with Division of Juvenile Justice** – All organizations contacted had deep respect for the current performance of the Division of Juvenile Justice in managing these facilities and their relationship with each community. All indicated that the best option for the community would be for continued operation of the facilities by Division of Juvenile Justice.



## Organization Responses

Specific responses to our search for entities with an interest in privatization in all three communities with existing detention centers are summarized below.

### Mat-Su

- **Presbyterian Hospitality House** – No interest in providing short-term detention services. This organization is a non-profit youth services agency which manages non-secure residential treatment, group home placement, and foster care for youth in the Mat-Su Valley region. The organization's Program Director, Ty Tigner, indicated that Presbyterian House would have no interest in operating a secure detention facility. Such a role would be inconsistent with their commitment to community-based treatment for youth. He indicated no knowledge of any private organization in the Mat-Su area that would be interested and capable of operating the facility.
- **Mat-Su Health Foundation** – No interest in operation of the facility in its current role and function. The Foundation works in association with the Mat-Su Regional Medical Center to fund community health and wellness programs in the Mat-Su Valley. Program Officer Ray Michaelson, a former Superintendent of the Mat-Su Youth Facility, stated that no organization in the community could step in and operate the facility for the Division of Juvenile Justice.
- **Knik Tribal Council** - Attempts to contact the Knik Tribal Council were unsuccessful. We left a message with the Tribal Council to contact the project team if they had any interest in assuming responsibility for operation of through a contract with Division of Juvenile Justice. No response was received.

In follow-up with the Mat-Su Youth Facility Superintendent and Palmer Probation Office Supervisor, both indicated no knowledge of any non-profits in the Mat-Su Valley area that would be interested in privatization of Mat-Su Youth Facility or that would be capable of providing a comparable level of operations and services.

### Kenai Peninsula

- **Kenai Peninsula Community Care Center** – No interest in providing detention services. The Care Center supports foster care programs, offers education and counseling programs to families, and provides non-secure residential services for behaviorally and emotionally disturbed adolescents who cannot be maintained at home or in foster care. Staff indicated the Center had absolutely no interest in expanding beyond their current mission into secure detention.
- **Central Peninsula Hospital Behavioral Health Department** – No interest in providing detention services. The organization provides residential substance abuse treatment services at Serenity House, as well as outpatient substance abuse treatment, and mental health counseling services. Shari Conner, the Intake coordinator and Prevention Grant Coordinator for the Behavioral Health Department stated that the youth facility plays an important role in the

community and operates well under current state management. In her opinion, there are no local organizations with the interest or skills to manage Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility.

- **Kenaitze Indian Tribe** – No interest in operation of Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility. Tribal Court Chief Judge Kim Sweet, as well as Coordinators Curt Shuey and Martina Georges, indicated that they work well with Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility and they have no desire to go into the business of operating a secure detention facility. They stated that the facility provides vital services and should continue to be operated as a state facility. They had no knowledge of any local organization that could manage Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility.

In follow-up, the Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility Superintendent and Kenai Probation Office Supervisor, both indicated no knowledge of any non-profit organizations in the Kenai Peninsula area that would be interested in privatization of Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility or that would be capable of providing a comparable level of operations and services.

Nome

- **Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC)** – No interest in operating the Nome Youth Facility. NSHC is a tribally owned and operated, independent, not-for profit health care organization. Angie Gorn, CEO of Norton Sound, and Lance Johnson, Director of the Behavioral Health Services Department, stated that private operation of a detention facility was outside the core mission of the organization.
- **Kawerak Inc.** – No interest in operating the Nome Youth Facility. Kawareck, Inc. is the regional non-profit corporation that provides services throughout the Bering Straits Region. Melanie Bahnke, President, indicated the facility provides vital services and should continue to be operated as a state facility.
- **Nome Public Schools** – Superintendent Shawn Arnold had no knowledge of any local organization that could operate the facility.
- **Anvil Mountain Correctional Center** – Superintendent Sandie Martinson had no knowledge of any local organization that could operate the facility.
- **Bering Straits School District** – Assistant Superintendent Carl White had no knowledge of any local organization that could operate the facility.
- **Nome Community Center** – Former Director Danielle Slingsby had no knowledge of any local organization that could operate the facility.
- **Nome Emergency Shelter Team** – Director Bridie Trainor had no knowledge of any local organization that could operate the facility.

In follow-up, the Nome Youth Facility Superintendent indicated no knowledge of any non-profits in the Nome region that would be interested in taking a role in the privatization of the Nome Youth Facility or that would be capable of providing a comparable level of operations and services.

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### 3. ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Recommendation 2: The State of Alaska should continue to operate the Kenai, Mat-Su, and Nome Youth facilities in their current function. These facilities provide substantial value to the state juvenile justice system and their local communities. Their highest and best use is in continued operation as detention facilities.

Recommendation 3: The Division of Juvenile Justice should develop a housing and treatment program for adjudicated delinquents with long-term treatment needs at the Nome Youth Facility. The program will provide a needed placement alternative for youth that are difficult to manage in the current system at little or no additional cost to the state.

#### *Key Findings*

- *The availability of local detention facilities allows for more effective use of limited law enforcement resources in these communities.*
- *The Kenai and Mat-Su facilities regularly use a high percentage of their available capacity.*
- *The Kenai and Mat-Su facilities are well designed to serve as detention facilities. Any alternative use would likely require substantial modifications to the physical plant.*
- *The Kenai and Nome facilities provide unique, culturally appropriate environments for locally detained youth. The Nome facility in particular, effectively accommodates the needs of Alaska Native youth in the region.*
- *The Kenai and Nome facilities provide detention services for very large geographic areas with remote communities.*
- *There is no serious local interest in repurposing any of these facilities or in privatizing any components of their operations.*
- *All facilities reviewed have outstanding levels of community support for their continued operation.*
- *The co-location of probation officers in these facilities enhances opportunities for coordination and cooperation in youth case management.*
- *Relocation of Mat-Su residents to the McLaughlin Youth Center in Anchorage would free the facility for potential alternative uses such as a detox center or stepdown facility for youth transitioning out of McLaughlin. However, cost savings from repurposing Mat-Su would be relatively small due to the offsetting need for additional staff to open a currently closed unit at McLaughlin Youth Center. Moreover, additional state funding would be needed to support any alternative use of the Mat-Su facility.*



- *Dedicating four beds at Nome Youth Facility for treatment of adjudicated delinquent youth would increase options available to the Division of Juvenile Justice for difficult to place youth, providing a regionally and culturally appropriate program option, while at the same time making full use of Nome facility resources, making it more cost-effective to operate.*
- *Contingent on the award of a state grant, the former Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility will be repurposed by Akeela, Inc. to serve as a Sobering Center for the Ketchikan area.*

## Analysis

With privatization of the current operation of these detention facilities not feasible, the next step in the analysis was to assess the value provided by these facilities to the state and the local communities, and to then determine the potential for other alternative uses of these facilities, either changing their mission or repurposing them to provide non-secure mental health and substance abuse treatment.

### Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility

**Current Value.** The primary rationale for opening the Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility was to provide a local option for the detention of youth. Prior to the opening of the facility, youth had to be transported to McLaughlin Youth Center in Anchorage. With regular disruptions in flight schedules and a four-hour drive to Anchorage, transport of youth to McLaughlin from Kenai Peninsula communities was problematic. The Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility is viewed as a vital local resource by law enforcement, the courts, and the families of the community. Local stakeholders suggested that public safety would be negatively affected without the availability of the Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility detention services, in that officials would be reluctant to detain youth who arguably should be in detention due to the distance to Anchorage.

There are clear advantages to the continued operation of this facility. These include:

- **Utilization.** The facility operated at 60 percent of its capacity in FY 2016.
- **Location.** The facility is in the center of a large geographic service area with many remote communities.
- **Public Safety.** Access to local detention allows law enforcement to maintain community presence by avoiding time-consuming transports of youth to Anchorage.
- **Community Support.** By all reports, the community places great value on having a facility that allowed detention of youth locally.
- **Conducive to Local Youth.** The facility provides a more culturally appropriate detention placement for youth that would not adjust well to a larger, more urban setting in Anchorage.
- **Operational Performance.** Kenai is a high-quality detention facility that provides secure management of detained youth that meets or exceeds professional standards.





- **Placement Alternative for Youth with Adjustment Issues.** The Division of Juvenile Justice regularly places adjudicated youth in treatment as well as youth in detention that experience difficulty in institutional adjustment at Kenai. The small setting, operational style, and experience of the staff has proven to be an effective option in treating these youths.
- **Stable Work Force.** The facility's workforce is experienced and has very little turnover.
- **Probation.** The facility provides office space for the regional probation staff which permits close working relationships between probation and detention.
- **Facility Design.** The Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility is a well-designed facility that provides an outstanding environment for short-term youth detention. There is capacity to expand if needed in the future.

**Cost.** Repurposing the facility would necessitate relocating the facility's population to other Division facilities, the closest being McLaughlin Youth Center. Given the small average daily population (6 residents on average in FY 2016), McLaughlin could realistically absorb the Kenai population within its existing operating units. Assuming the costs for commodities and services would follow the transferred youth, the primary savings from closure of the facility would be the elimination of all staff positions, with the exception of the maintenance worker, who would be needed to prevent the facility from deteriorating. Estimated annual staff savings from repurposing of the facility and relocation of the residents to other facilities is approximately \$1,660,000. Although, this cost savings would be less due to costs for escorting youth from the Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility to McLaughlin Youth Center, additional staffing needed at McLaughlin to support increased number of youth and relocation of probation services into a leased space.

**Repurposing.** Community stakeholders all described the facility as an extremely valuable part of the local justice/social service system and saw no realistic alternatives for repurposing the Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility to an alternative function that would provide greater value than the current operation of the facility.

In summary, the facility provides substantial value to Kenai Peninsula communities as well as to the Division of Juvenile Justice.

### Mat-Su Youth Facility

**Current Value.** The Mat-Su Youth Facility was developed in response to increased need for detention services in the Mat-Su Valley region, one of the fastest growing regions in the state of Alaska. Mat-Su has the largest capacity of the Division's short-term detention facilities and the highest average daily population. There are a number of significant factors that argue for the continued operation of this facility as a detention center. These include:

- **Utilization.** The facility operates at maximum capacity almost all the time. It has the highest occupancy rate of any of the detention facilities (79 percent in 2016) with an average daily population that has steadily trended upward over the last five years.



- **Increasing Demand for Services.** The facility is located in a high population growth area, particularly in the at-risk youth age group that is the program's target population. The local school district had experienced a student growth rate in excess of 500 new students in 2015.<sup>7</sup>
- **Community Support.** The facility has strong community support, especially with the senior citizen community who are active volunteers and the Mat-Su Borough school district that actively supports the educational programs at the facility.
- **Public Safety.** Access to local detention keeps local police on the road in the Mat-Su region, rather than transporting youth to Anchorage. Given the number of youth in detention from the area, the availability of the facility substantially reduces the number of hours required for law enforcement to transport youth.
- **Stable Work Force.** The facility's workforce is experienced and has very little turnover.
- **Operational Efficiency.** Mat-Su is the most cost-effective detention facility to operate at slightly over \$480 per day per resident.
- **Probation.** The facility provides office space for the regional probation office which permits close working relationships between detention and probation staff.
- **Facility Design.** Mat-Su Youth Facility is a well-designed and maintained facility that provides an outstanding environment for short-term youth detention. It has readily available capacity to expand if needed.

Given the need for detention capacity, as evidenced by the current utilization levels, and a very high level of operational performance, Mat-Su Youth Facility appears to be a significant asset both for the Division of Juvenile Justice and the local community.

Community stakeholders expressed a strong preference for continued operation of the facility in its current function. Even if the detention function is moved to McLaughlin, there was some interest expressed in maintaining a "bare bones" intake function at the facility to relieve local law enforcement from the responsibility of transporting youth into Anchorage.

**Cost.** The major argument for repurposing the Mat-Su Youth Facility for alternative use is its proximity to the McLaughlin Youth Center in Anchorage, approximately 44 miles away, and the ready availability of currently closed housing units at that facility which could be used for short-term detention. Given this proximity, it can be argued that Mat-Su youth could quite easily be integrated into McLaughlin while running a very similar (or even virtually identical) program model with modest impact on the workforce and distance for families to visit.

Potential cost savings from such action would be diminished by the fact that opening a currently closed unit at McLaughlin would require additional staff to operate the unit. The required staffing pattern would be roughly the same as currently utilized at Mat-Su, in essence resulting in the transfer of current security staff positions at Mat-Su to McLaughlin. The Mat-Su Youth Facility maintenance

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<sup>7</sup> Hollander, Z.



staff, at least in the short-term, would still need to be retained to keep the facility from deteriorating. This leaves the only staff savings from closing Mat-Su Youth Facility as the elimination of the Superintendent, Office Assistant, and Nurse I.

Cost savings from closing Mat-Su Youth Facility would accordingly be relatively small. Salary and benefit savings from the elimination of the three positions identified above would total approximately \$470,000 annually. While there would also be some efficiencies achieved in food and operational support, the absolute amount of savings in these areas would be minimal as the entire facility budget for commodities and services is less than \$400,000, and the bulk of these expenditures would follow the youth to McLaughlin's budget.

**Repurposing.** One potential repurposed function for the Mat-Su Youth Facility identified by the community stakeholders interviewed was conversion to a detoxification center for local inebriates and substance abusers. This was described as a significant local need. In the absence of such a facility, impaired individuals are typically taken to the emergency room of the local hospital. This is an inappropriate treatment setting for detox and often disrupts emergency room services. The Mat-Su Youth Facility, while not ideal for this service, could be modified as needed. However, state or grant funding would be required for modification and ongoing operation of the facility to provide detox services. Other potential uses included use of the facility as a stepdown, transitional unit for youth coming out of McLaughlin. However, this type of initiative would represent a new Division of Juvenile Justice program and would require additional state funding.

In summary, Mat-Su serves a current local need, as evidenced by its high rate of utilization. Relocation of residents to McLaughlin would incur substantial costs at that facility, offsetting most of the savings from any closure. While several potential repurposed uses of the facility were identified, each would require additional state investment. The expressed preference of stakeholders was for continued operation of the facility as a detention center.

### Nome Youth Facility

**Current Value.** The Nome Youth Center is the oldest and most unique facility of those reviewed in this project, primarily due to its location and the population it serves. There are a number of significant factors that argue for the continued operation of this facility as a detention center. These include:

- **Location.** Nome is the only juvenile detention facility within 600 miles and serves the immense geographic area of Northwest Alaska.
- **Youth Population Needs.** The population served by Nome is largely Alaska Native. These youths are typically from rural villages and have distinct cultural and social needs that need to be accommodated in order to address rehabilitation or treatment needs. Effective treatment of these youth requires staff with a high degree of cultural competency, appropriate programming, and a supportive living environment. Nome Youth Facility effectively meets these criteria for detention of these youth.



- **Community Support.** The facility has very strong community support. Facility residents engage in a number of community works projects and are engaged with volunteer and tribal groups throughout the area.
- **Public Safety.** Access to local detention provides a valuable resource to law enforcement for youth who need to be detained. Given concerns about removing youth away from the region, the absence of the facility could limit law enforcement's response to delinquent or criminal youth behavior.
- **Staff Quality.** The facility has a very dedicated staff that fully understand the unique needs of youth, while also showing an appropriate concern for safety and security requirements.

**Cost.** The facility is very expensive, with an operating budget of \$2,813,217 and the highest average daily cost per youth (\$1,541) of any juvenile facility in FY 2016. Part of this is due to the high cost of operating a small facility in a remote area such as Nome. In short, everything costs more, including staffing, where costs are substantially higher here due to the geographic pay differential provided. The number of staff required to operate the facility is fixed due to its layout, regardless of the number of youth housed. The other factor contributing to its low cost-efficiency is the level of utilization. With population levels averaging 5-7 youth over the last few years, utilization is consistently below 50 percent, the lowest level in the Division now that Ketchikan has closed.

Closing the facility could save approximately \$1.7 million, but would necessitate transfer of resident youth to distant facilities and layoff of the facility's staff. In the process however, the State would lose a very unique, valuable facility that performs exceptionally well in meeting the needs of at-risk youth in a difficult-to-serve area.

Another approach to the cost of the facility is to improve its level of cost-effectiveness and overall value to the system by increasing utilization. One proposal under review would dedicate four beds at the facility for youth in long-term, post-adjudication treatment. The program would be designed specifically for youth that are difficult to place due to complex clinical needs, age of the youth (close to aging out of the juvenile justice system), or in need of transitional services appropriate to Alaska Native communities.

The program would feature individual and family therapy, culturally appropriate services, community work service, academic and vocational education, and experiential programming to include subsistence, and outdoor education. Although the facility was not designed for long-term detention placements, the unique needs of youth from this remote region and the effectiveness of detaining offenders close to home would make the establishment of long-term treatment program at the Nome Youth Facility advantageous to the Division of Juvenile Justice.

The program would provide a superior placement opportunity for youth that are from Northwest Alaska that ultimately become adjudicated delinquent long term committed youth. Many of those youth are from very small communities and villages and are mostly Alaska Native. Although the number of youth targeted for this program is small, the number of beds typically available at the



Nome Youth Facility is similarly small, as the facility has a rated capacity of only 14 and rarely houses more than ten youth at any given time.

Accordingly, the small number of potential participants could easily fit into the current staffing and housing provided in Nome. Moreover, the Nome Youth Facility is uniquely qualified for the change in mission as it already has mental health services available at the facility and well-developed cultural programs. The proposed program is in fact similar to the “Missouri Model,” which is a nationally recognized approach for treatment of juvenile offenders.

The “Missouri Model” consists of small facilities (usually around 10-15 youth) located at sites throughout the State that keep youth close to their homes. The facilities generally do not look like traditional jails with traditional cells and only use “isolation” for emergency and/or extreme situations. They are usually housed in a dorm-type setting, often with bunk beds. The staff are trained and educated to work in teams with small groups of youth. The goal is to treat the youth with respect and dignity and instead of more traditional correctional approaches, use a rehabilitative and therapeutic model that works towards teaching the youth how to make positive, lasting changes in their behavior. It is cognitive based while fully understanding that the juvenile justice system also has many youths that need mental health services. (This Model has been around for over 30 years and has been replicated in various other states. The most recent studies show an 8 percent recidivism rate for youth that participate and complete the program.)

The current operating ratio of staff to youth is very high so adding youth to the programing would not appear to require additional staff. Nome has engaged and knowledgeable staff that could reasonably add four youth to the current level of programing and activities. If the youth considered for this project are properly screened and evaluated, additional staff would not be required.

Operating costs would be modestly impacted as the cost for a meal is only \$3.50 and the facility is already staffed to house 14 youth. Economies of scale would suggest that staffing and facility costs would likely be only slightly impacted. There could actually be a cost savings if youth were diverted from expensive private placements to a treatment program at Nome.

***Repurposing.*** Community stakeholders all described the facility as an extremely valuable part of the local justice/social service system and saw no realistic alternatives for repurposing the facility to an alternative function.

In summary, the Nome Youth Facility provides a valuable detention resource to Northwest Alaska that effectively meets the unique needs of small, local communities throughout the region. The facility is expensive, but its overall level of cost-effectiveness and system value can be significantly increased by expanding its mission to manage a small number of adjudicated youth in need of long-term treatment. There appear to be no viable programs for which the facility could be repurposed.

#### Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility

***Current Value.*** The recent closure of the Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility in September, 2016 has resulted in the relocation of the youth served at that facility to the Johnson Youth Center in Juneau. The impact of this closure, as described by local justice system officials, will be to diminish the



effectiveness of the case management and processing of local youth through the justice system. As a result of their relocation to Juneau, former residents of the Ketchikan facility will have reduced access to the courts and legal counsel. Social ties with family and community will become more difficult for resident youth to maintain, which will have a negative impact on their reintegration into the community. While the small numbers of youth housed at the facility and its high operating cost make its closure understandable, it is still important to recognize the negative consequences of the closure of the facility.

***Repurposing.*** However, the closure does provide an opportunity for alternative use of the facility. By terms of the agreement between the City of Ketchikan and the State, ownership of the facility reverted to the City of Ketchikan creating an opportunity for repurposing the facility to serve other community needs. To that end the City issued an RFP this past October for proposals from groups to establish alternative community programs at the facility. The City received one proposal, from Akeela Inc., one of Alaska's oldest behavioral health treatment providers. Akeela proposes to convert the facility to a Sobering Center. Inebriates would be brought to the facility by law enforcement, medical staff, or members of the community. At the facility they will receive assessment, monitoring, and potentially referral for follow-up services at Akeela's substance abuse treatment facility in Ketchikan, Horizon House. The facility would essentially provide a safe environment for impaired persons to sober up, and establish a means to identify persons in need of follow-up treatment services.

## 4. SYSTEM OVERVIEW

### *Key Findings*

- *Admissions of juveniles to short-term detention in Alaska has fallen 48 percent since 2006. The average daily population of youth in short-term detention declined by 29 percent over this same period.*
- *Use of privatization in juvenile justice is primarily targeted at non-secure, treatment-oriented community facilities managed by non-profit social service organizations. Management of secure detention for juveniles is overwhelmingly a government-managed function throughout the United States.*

The mission of the Division of Juvenile Justice is to hold offenders accountable for their behavior, promote the safety and restoration of victims and communities, and assist offenders and their families in developing skills to prevent crime. Youth detention facilities provide secure, short-term detention to stabilize justice system-involved youth, with an objective to facilitate their return to the community and the processing of their cases through the justice system.

Youth enter detention primarily as a result of referrals from law enforcement, or violations of probation and/or court conditions, pending final adjudication. Initial intake processes include health assessment, mental health and suicide screening, behavioral health intervention if necessary, and medical services. During their stay, resident youth receive educational programs, recreation, religious services, substance abuse education, anger management, and life skills development classes. Length of stay is brief, as the goal of the system is to maintain youth in the community to the maximum extent possible and/or to find an appropriate secure or non-secure residential treatment setting in which to place the youth.

The Division participates in the national Performance-based Standards (PbS) system. PbS was launched in 1995 by the OJJDP, and is a data-driven improvement model grounded in research that holds juvenile justice agencies and facilities to the highest standards for operations, programs, and services. The objective is to assist youth-serving agencies in delivering effective, safe rehabilitation and reentry services. PbS provides a uniform data collection and reporting tool that shows the impact of services on youths, staff, and families.

The Division has used PbS data to regularly analyze performance across a spectrum of outcome measure groups, identify areas in which improvement is most needed, and create specific and measurable facility improvement plans to address identified needs. Alaska facilities have historically performed at a high level in outcome areas related to Justice (honoring juvenile rights and applying rules fairly), Programming (engaging youth in rehabilitative programming while in the facility), and Reintegration (providing links to community based programming prior to release).

As of November 4, 2016 all Division facilities are in full compliance with federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). This federal law sets operational standards and program requirements to eliminate sexual assault in correctional facilities. The Division has zero tolerance for any acts of sexual



abuse, assault, misconduct, or harassment. Sexual activity between staff and juveniles, volunteers or contract personnel and juveniles, or between juveniles, regardless of consensual status, is prohibited and subject to administrative and criminal disciplinary sanctions. The Division trains staff, contractors, teachers, and volunteers how to prevent, detect, report and respond to incidents of sexual abuse. It also educates all facility residents of their rights to be free of sexual abuse and harassment and how to report known or suspected abuse.

## System Profile

The Division currently has a total of 106 short-term detention beds, as shown in Table 1. Of the Division's total detention capacity, 67 beds are located at the state's four youth detention/treatment centers located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Bethel, and Juneau. These facilities also operate 118 treatment beds for adjudicated youth. The three youth detention facilities in Palmer (Mat-SU), Kenai, and Nome provide a total of 39 short-term detention beds. In addition, the former Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility operated with 10 short-detention beds prior to its closure in September, 2016.

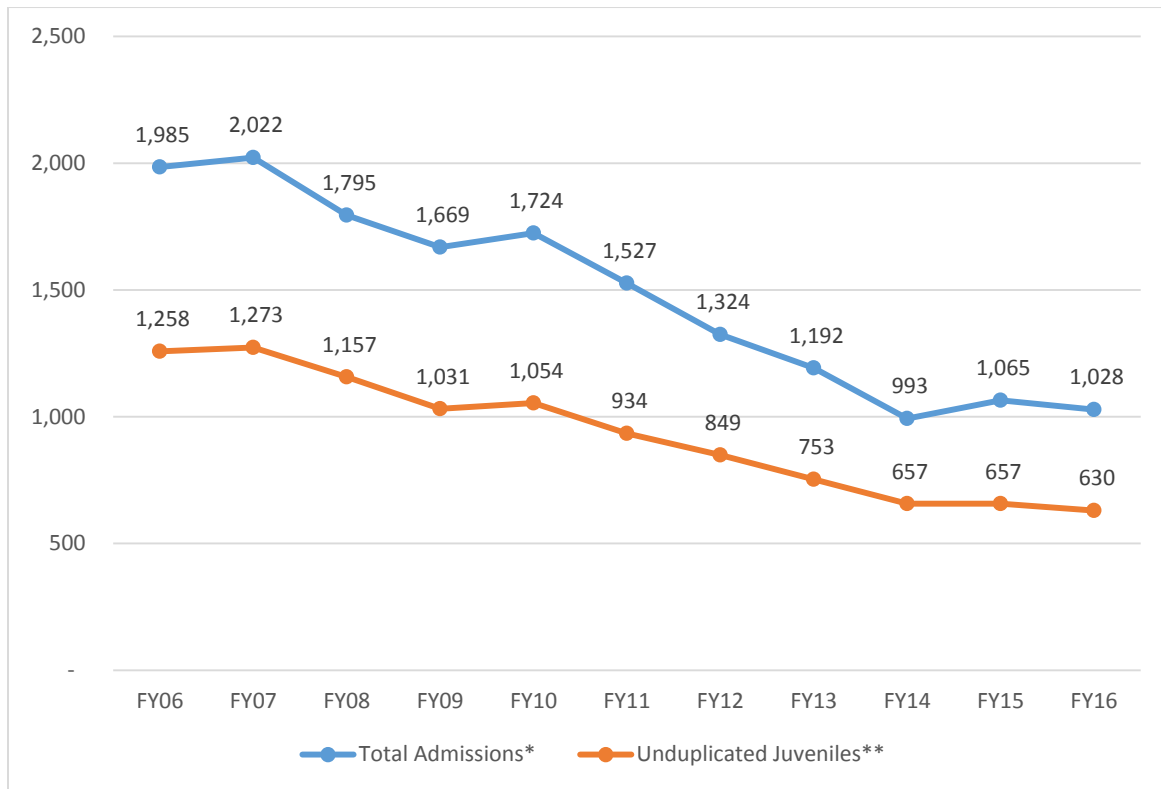
Table 1: Current Division of Juvenile Justice Youth Facility Capacity

Facility	Detention Beds	Treatment Beds	Total Capacity
McLaughlin (Anchorage)	35	75	110
Bethel	12	5	17
Johnson (Juneau)	8	22	30
Fairbanks	12	16	28
Mat-Su	15		15
Kenai	10		10
Nome	14		14
Ketchikan*			
<b>Total</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>224</b>

\*Closed September 15, 2016.

The number of admissions of juveniles to short-term detention in the Division of Juvenile Justice has fallen dramatically since 2006. As shown in Figure 1, despite a slight increase in 2015, the number of juveniles admitted to detention has fallen by 48 percent during this period while unduplicated juvenile admissions declined 50 percent during the same time period.

Figure 1: Admissions to Detention, 2006-2016

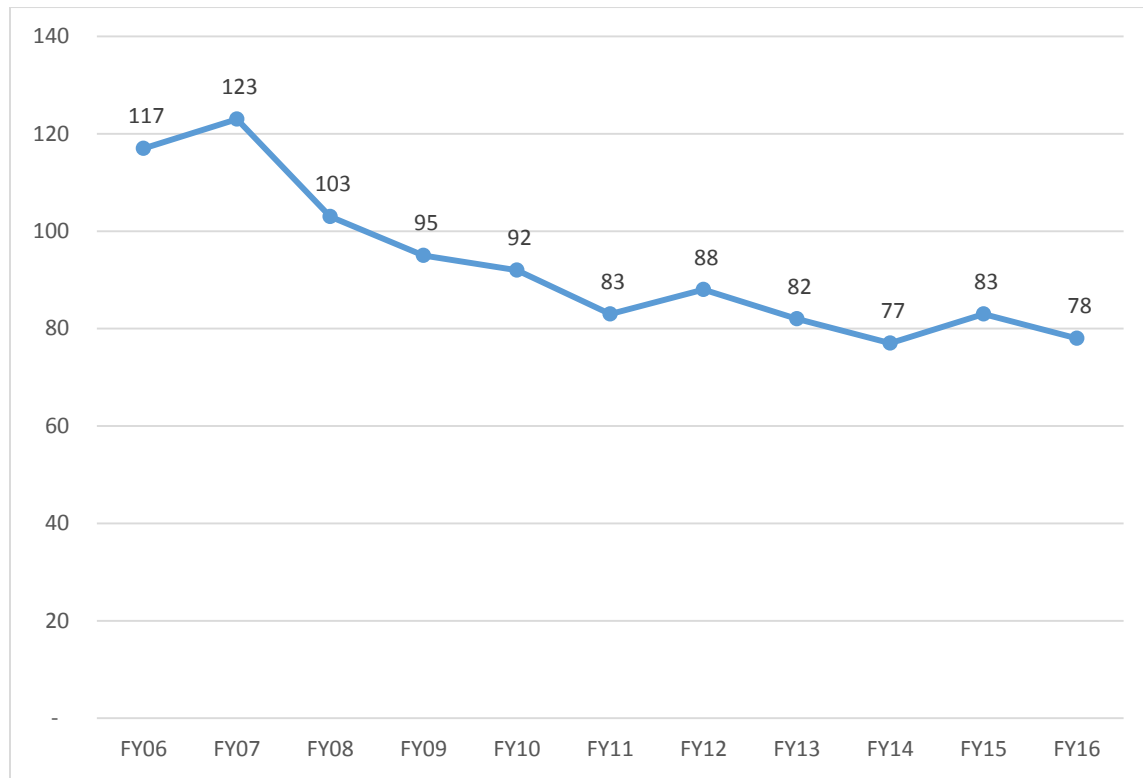


\*This count is of total admission records to Division detention facilities. If a juvenile was moved from one facility to another, or has a temporary absence from the facility (for passes, AWOL, outside treatment, disciplinary transfers, etc.) and returns, these admissions would be counted as two admissions. Beginning in FY2012, the JOMIS movement log began replacing some of these temporary releases to reflect a more true count of juvenile admissions.

\*\* A juvenile with multiple admissions during the fiscal year counts as having only one admission even if the juvenile had admissions to multiple facilities. This gives the true number of juveniles admitted to DJJ Detention Facilities during a fiscal year.

The average daily population of youth in short-term detention declined at a slower rate, falling 29 percent over the last ten years, from 117 in 2006, to 78 in 2016. Most of this decline occurred prior to 2013. Since that time, the average daily population system wide has been relatively stable.

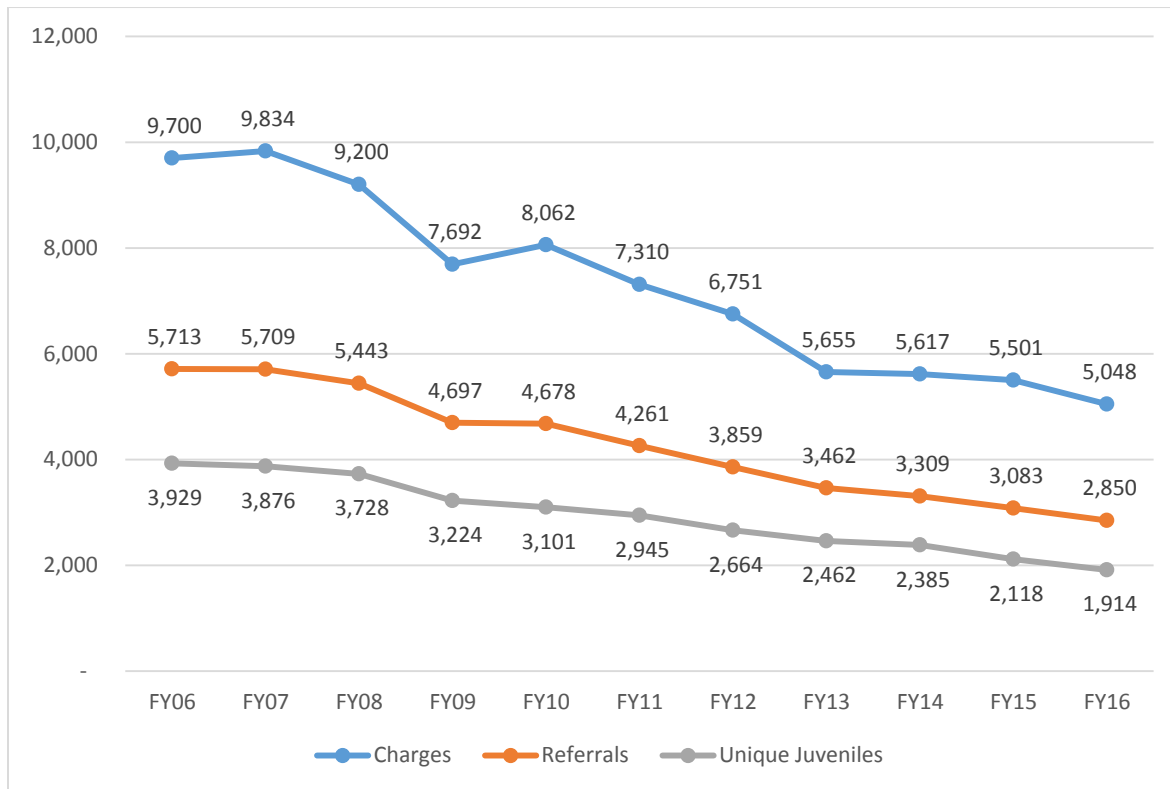
Figure 2: Short-Term Detention Facility Average Daily Population, 2006 - 2016



Declining detention facility utilization is a function of large drops in juvenile crime and referrals to the juvenile justice system. Over the last twenty years, violent juvenile crime rates have fallen by over 50 percent nationally.<sup>8</sup> The pattern of referrals to the Division of Juvenile Justice for juvenile crimes in Alaska is consistent with this trend. As shown in Figure 3, the number of unduplicated juveniles and overall referrals to the Division of Juvenile Justice have both fallen by 49 and 50 percent respectively over the last ten years, while the number of charges filed has fallen by 48 percent. The rate of decline is consistent across felony and misdemeanor crime classes, as well as categories, such as property crimes and crimes against persons.

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR\\_Display.asp?ID=qa05201](http://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/crime/JAR_Display.asp?ID=qa05201). December 13, 2015.

Figure 3: Juvenile Referrals and Charges, FY 2006 – FY 2016



The four short-term detention facilities reviewed in this report were all either built in the early 2000's (Mat-Su, Kenai, and Ketchikan) or were expanded/remodeled during this time period (Nome). In effect the state significantly expanded its detention capacity in response to growing demand for detention in the late 1990's, only to see that demand steadily decline once these facilities were brought online. With excess short-term detention capacity, the challenge facing the Division is how to make the most efficient use of short-term detention capacity, while still meeting the ongoing needs of the communities which these facilities serve.

## Juvenile Justice Privatization

Privatization of correctional facility operations, i.e. contracting with a private company or a non-profit organization for facility management and operations, is a strategy that has been increasingly utilized by states to reduce correctional system costs or to address performance issues.<sup>9</sup> While research is mixed on the overall effectiveness of privatization in reducing costs,<sup>10</sup> the fact that private correctional facilities generally have much lower labor costs than public sector facilities, due to reduced salary and training levels is well established.<sup>11</sup> The degree to which these lower costs actually translate into

<sup>9</sup> Gaes, G., Cost, (2008) Performance Studies Look at Prison Privatization, NIJ Journal No. 259, NCJ 221507

<sup>10</sup> Jing, Y., (2010) Prison privatization: a perspective on core governmental functions. Crime, Law, & Social Change, 54, 263-278.

<sup>11</sup> Schultz, C., Prison Privatization Driving Influences and Performance Evaluation, Research Journal of Justice Studies and Forensic Science, Spring 2015, 103, VOLUME III



savings for government clients depends upon a number of factors, including the structure and scale of contracted services, as well as government monitoring efforts.<sup>12</sup>

Juvenile justice systems throughout the United States make significant use of private or non-governmental community service providers. Current data indicate that 45 percent of the juvenile facilities in the United States that serve justice system-involved youth are managed by private or non-profit organizations. These facilities hold approximately 29 percent of the total juvenile justice population.<sup>13</sup> The reason for this disparity between the number of facilities and the percent of the population held in them is that most private juvenile facilities are very small. Nationally, 78 percent of group homes are private, and most hold 10 or fewer residents. Most shelters, wilderness camps, and residential treatment centers for juveniles are also privately operated.<sup>14</sup>

Youth under the supervision of the Division of Juvenile Justice are also commonly placed in private community residential facilities. The vast majority of these placements are implemented as alternatives to detention or after a delinquency adjudication, including DHSS custody and probation under AS 47.12.120(b)(3). Community-based programs include alcohol and drug treatment facilities, independent living programs, emergency non-secure shelters, residential psychiatric treatment centers and hospitals, and residential behavioral health treatment facilities. Between FY 11- FY 16 the most common community-based placements were residential behavioral health treatment facilities, emergency shelters, and alcohol and drug treatment facilities, with an average length of stay of 102 days. In addition, Division youth are referred to the Alaska Military Youth Academy and are provided placement in foster homes.

However, the use of privatization for secure detention is much more limited. OJJDP reports that nationally, in 2013 1,488 juveniles were held in private secure detention facilities. This represents approximately 8 percent of the national population of juveniles held in secure detention.<sup>15</sup> The predominant model for the use of privatization in juvenile corrections appears to be targeted primarily at non-secure, treatment-oriented community facilities managed by non-profit social service organizations. By contrast, management of secure detention for juveniles is overwhelmingly a government-managed function throughout the United States.

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<sup>12</sup> Lundahl, B., (2009) Prison Privatization: A Meta-analysis of Cost and Quality of Confinement Indicators, *Research on Social Work Practice*, vol. 19 no. 4 383-394

<sup>13</sup> Hockenbury, S., (2016), *Juvenile Residential Facility Census, 2014: Selected Findings*, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs, September, NCJ 250123.

<sup>14</sup> Hockenbury (2016).

<sup>15</sup> OJJDP, (2016) *Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement*.

## 5. FACILITY REVIEWS

### *Key Findings*

- *Security systems at all facilities provide an adequate amount of control over the resident population.*
- *Facility staff appear to be dedicated, involved and enthusiastic professionals that understand the unique needs of the youth in their custody. They combine this expertise with an appropriate level of emphasis on the safety and security demands of a youth detention facility.*
- *Staffing patterns at all facilities are appropriate given facility layouts and operational practices.*
- *The Kenai and Mat-Su physical plants are well designed and appear to be in excellent condition.*
- *The Nome Youth Facility currently and for the foreseeable future will require substantial capital investment to assure continued operation, consistent with current standards.*
- *All facilities maintain an exceptional array of programs, given their size, and are supported by active community participation. The Nome Youth Facility is particularly notable for its comprehensive set of programs tailored to meet the unique needs of the facility's residents.*
- *Ketchikan community stakeholders describe the primary impact of the closure of the Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility as worse outcomes for at-risk youth in contact with the local justice system.*

In order to determine the optimal approach and organization of short-term detention services for the state, the project team conducted a comprehensive review of the operations of the Mat-Su, Kenai, and Nome Youth Centers. This review assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of current facility operations, placed into context with overall juvenile justice system needs and trends

### Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility

The Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility is located in Kenai, Alaska approximately 160 miles southwest of Anchorage on the western tip of the Kenai Peninsula, serving the communities of Tyonek, Seldovia, Nanwalek, Port Graham, Fritz Creek, Nikolaevsk, Homer, Anchor Point, Ninilchik, Clam Gulch, Kasilof, Nikiski, Kenai, Soldotna, Sterling, Cooper Landing, Moose Pass, Hope and Seward.

The facility opened in September 2003 and is the newest facility among the Division's units. The facility is located on a 10-acre plot that was donated to the state by the city of Kenai. The facility was constructed with strong support of the local community leaders who wanted a local facility to serve the

needs of the youth from the region who required detention. Prior to the establishment of the facility, detained youth were primarily sent to McLaughlin Youth Center in Anchorage.

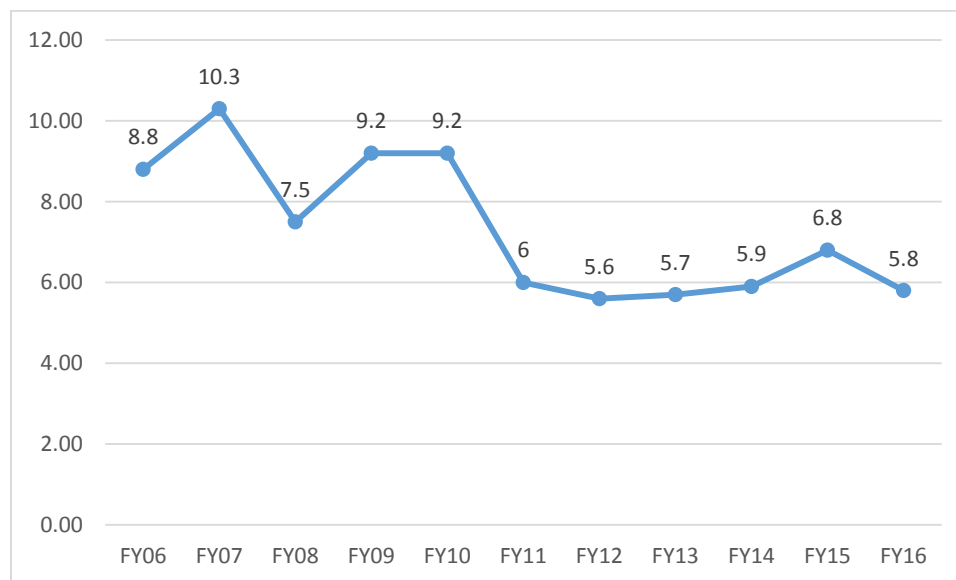
The facility operates as a 10-bed co-ed facility, with an average resident population of 6 youth in FY 2016. According to facility staff, about 20 percent of the admissions are female. Male and female youth are co-mingled in all activities and due to the design of the facility, must be housed on the same housing unit wing. Facility administrators have taken some steps to facilitate management of co-ed housing, including installation of tinted window shields on unit windows.

The facility also houses "transitional youth" at the facility. Transitional youth are those who have been in a treatment program at another facility, have completed the required programming and are preparing for release back into the community. At the time of the site visit there was one transitional youth at the facility.

The Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility also houses the regional probation office. Similar to the design of Mat-Su facility, a wing of the administrative offices of the facility was constructed with office space for the probation staff that serves the region.

Facility population levels peaked in FY 2007 and have since declined. For the past five years, the average daily population has ranged from 6-7 residents. The capacity utilization rate for FY 2016 was 58 percent.

Figure 4: Kenai Average Daily Population, 2006-2016



The per bed and per resident cost figures shown in Table 2 take into account federal funds, grants, and reallocated funds, in addition to General Fund appropriations. With largely fixed operating costs, the facility's level of utilization produces a high average daily cost for housing youth in the facility, with costs approaching \$975 per day per youth in FY 2016.

Table 2: Kenai Cost per Day, FY 2014 – FY 2016

	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Total Spending	\$ 2,001,972	\$ 2,138,973	\$ 2,134,609
Capacity	10.0	10.0	10.0
ADP	6.07	6.80	6.00
Annual Cost per Day per Youth	\$ 903.60	\$ 861.79	\$ 974.71

**Facility Operations:** The Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility’s operational philosophy focuses on the principles of restorative justice to ensure community safety, offender accountability, skill development, and restoration of the victims. The staff utilizes these principles in the daily operation of the facility as well as the development of services and programs for the youth housed at the facility.

Data on incidents indicates a facility that is very stable with trained staff that utilizes skills in de-escalation techniques. On-site reviews of facility operations showed a positive environment in which staff effectively interacted and communicated with residents.

**Staffing:** The official organization chart for Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility, updated as of 6/1/2016 authorizes 18 positions for the facility as shown in Table 3. The Superintendent reported that the facility has low staff turnover and as a result retains an experienced staff with many years of service in the system. Staff are easily managed, enjoy their jobs, and are knowledgeable in managing the youth assigned to the facility.

Table 3: Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility Authorized staffing by Position

Position	FTE’s
Superintendent	1
Unit Supervisor	1
Office Assistant	1
Juvenile Justice Officer III (shift supervisor)	3
Juvenile Justice Officer I/II	10
Nurse II	1
Journeyman Level Maintenance Generalist	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

The facility also has two temporary/non-permanent positions available to cover for vacancies, absences, and special duties. Transportation of youth to court, appointments and movement to other facilities or living situations is a constant task that impacts the availability of staff. The availability of the temporary/non-permanent staff greatly assists in staffing these types of assignments.

There is one Juvenile Justice Officer (JJO) III assigned to each of the three primary shifts. In addition to the JJO III, the JJO II’s are typically assigned according to the following allocation: 3 on the day shift, 3 on the swing shift, and 2 on the night shift. One JJO serves as the Transitional Services Unit





manager. In addition to the JJO staff the facility has a Maintenance worker, a Nurse, who works 3 days per week, and an Office Assistant.

**Facility Physical Plant:** Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility is a relatively new facility. The facility has no obvious deficiencies and no major physical plant defects or maintenance issues were reported by the staff. As noted the video camera system is being upgraded.

Housing for the youth is contained in one wing that is immediately adjacent to a large day room. This necessitates that both genders are housed on the same wing. All program and recreational activities also are co-ed.

The facility has large accessible adjacent outdoor recreational and program space that is fenced, well-lit, and monitored by video surveillance systems. The outdoor spaces are large, open, and adaptable for most outdoor recreational activities. There is a large hard-surfaced recreational area immediately accessible from the day room. The facility also has a large classroom and a functional but small kitchen.

Projected capital improvements for all State owned and operated facilities address the deferred maintenance that is required to keep the buildings safe, secure, and in good condition. The capital improvements listed in the following table represent projected needs based on annual condition audits completed by DHSS's Facilities Section. Once audits are completed and deferred maintenance projects identified and vetted, they are prioritized using an industry accepted prioritization formula in order to request capital funds from the Legislature.

Table 4: Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility Capital Improvement Program

Requirement Name	Description	Cost
Add Cooling Condensers to System	Add Cooling Condenser Units to cool building down during hot summer.	\$ 253,096
Carpeting Replacement	Replace carpeting in the Classroom, Dayroom, Activity Wing, Unit leaders Office and Control Room.	\$ 158,030
Security Camera Upgrade	Upgrade the security camera surveillance system.	\$ 115,999
12" Vinyl Floor Tile Replacement	Vinyl 12" Tiles are in need of replacement.	\$ 41,350
Perimeter Fence Repair	The exercise yard fence is in need of repair to maintain a sound perimeter.	\$ 41,206
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 609,681</b>

**Population Management:** Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility averages 70-80 admissions per year. Data on resident population characteristics for 2016 include:

- Number of unduplicated youth admitted: 60



- Percentage of male/female youth admitted: 79 percent male and 21 percent female
- Percentage of Admissions that are transfers from other Division of Juvenile Justice facilities (Includes transfer from treatment program): 13 percent
- Average length of stay: 33 days
- Percentage of youth that leave detention and go home: 55 percent
- Percentage that left detention and went to another secure facility: 26 percent
- Percentage that leave detention and go to foster homes and or non-secure residential housing: 25 percent
- Percentage that have been in detention previously: 30 percent
- Percentage that come into Detention on Probation Violations: 40 percent

Kenai is unique for a detention facility in that it regularly admits adjudicated delinquent youth committed for long-term treatment. The facility has shown some success in managing long-treatment youth that may have difficulty in adjusting to other Division of Juvenile Justice facilities.

***Programs:*** The mission and operational philosophy of Kenai is based on restorative justice models which stress community services and community mentoring. As such the community is very active in providing services and programs to the youth assigned to the facility. Program offerings include:

- Recreational Therapy group
- Expectations group
- Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART)-Social Skills, Moral Reasoning, & Anger Control groups
- Transitional Planning
- Linking to Vocational Rehabilitation Services when applicable
- Religious/Spiritual Group- offered, but not required
- Regular and Summer School

The facility has a close working relationship with the local school district. Through this partnership the school district administers a comprehensive education program to the youth assigned to Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility. The school district provides a full-time teacher through a contract that services the facility through a 260-day school year. The points of emphasis in the program are remedial education since most of the youth are two or more years behind academically. The assigned teacher has reportedly been extremely successful in improving the performance of those



students who previously had experienced difficulty in school, including youth transferred to Kenai from other Division facilities.

A strong volunteer program at the Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility supports religious instruction and education programs. The facility has volunteers from several denominations that provide Bible study, religious counseling, and religious instruction. In addition to religious programming, volunteers provide substance abuse prevention and life skills programs. The Challenger Center provides team building and science education. The local Women's Center provides relationship training and serves as a third party center for PREA.

**Health Care:** Medical services are provided at Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility by one part-time registered nurse who works 3 days per week. Contractual agreements provide fee for service access to physician, dental and mental health services including a psychiatrist. Through an on-call system, the nurse, working with contractual health care staff, ensures that the facility has medical response coverage 24 hours per day.

## Mat-Su Youth Facility

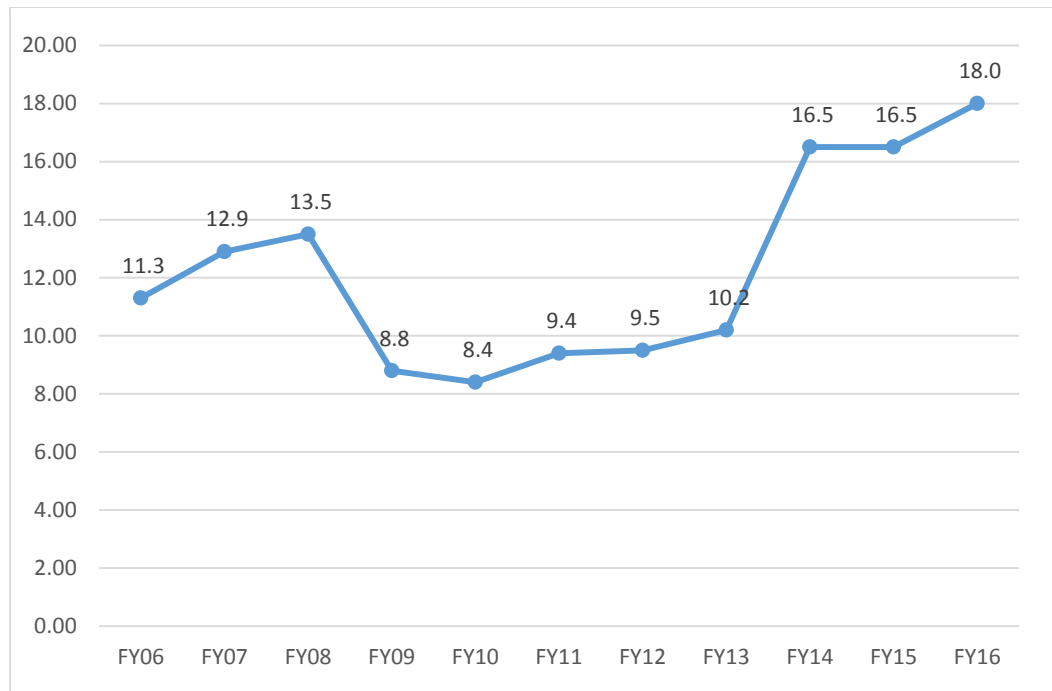
The Mat-Su Youth Facility is located in Palmer, approximately 40 miles north of Anchorage. The facility was opened in September, 2000 as a response to overcrowding at the McLaughlin Youth Center in Anchorage. The facility serves as the primary juvenile detention facility for the communities of Palmer, Wasilla, and other smaller communities in the greater Matanuska-Susitna valley region north of Anchorage.

The facility operates as a 15 bed co-ed facility. During the time of the site visit the facility housed 16 youth (11 males and 5 females). The male and female youth are co-mingled in all activities and due to the design of the facility must be housed on the same wing of the facility. The facility also housed three "transitional youth" at the time of the site visit. Transitional youth are those who have been in a treatment program at another facility and have completed the required programming and are preparing for release back into the community.

The Mat-Su Youth Facility also houses the regional probation office. A wing of the administrative offices of the facility was constructed with office space for the probation staff that serves the region that includes a large geographic area that extends as far south as Kodiak Island.

As shown in Figure 5, the facility's average daily population dropped substantially in 2008-2010, then slowly grew through FY 2014, when the creation of the Community Detention program at the facility increased the population to current levels. This utilization rate of 90 percent ranks as the highest of Division's short-term detention facilities.

Figure 5: Mat-Su Average Daily Population, 2006 – 2016



With the largest capacity and the highest utilization rate of the short-term detention facilities, Mat-Su is also the most cost-effective, with the lowest daily cost per resident.

Table 5: Mat-Su Cost per Day, FY 2014 – FY 2016

	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Total Spending	\$ 2,787,721	\$ 2,660,389	\$ 2,645,236
*Capacity	20.0	20.0	18.0
ADP	16.5	16.5	18.0
Cost per Day per Youth	\$ 462.88	\$ 442.01	\$ 483.15

\*Includes the Community Detention Program

**Facility Operations:** The facility does have adequate video and camera coverage inside and out of the facility. Overall, the data on incidents indicates a facility that is very stable with trained staff that utilizes skills in de-escalation techniques.

**Staffing:** The facility table of organization chart indicates that there are 20 authorized full-time positions for the facility, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Mat-Su Youth Facility Authorized Staffing by Position

Position	FTE's
Superintendent	1
Unit Supervisor	1
Office Assistant	1



Position	FTE's
Juvenile Justice Officer III (shift supervisor)	3
Juvenile Justice Officer I/II	12
Nurse II	1
Journeyman Level Maintenance Generalist	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

In addition, two temporary/non-permanent staff fill in when needed to cover for vacancies, absences, special duties, transportation, etc.

The current staff roster deploys a shift supervisor (JJO III) on each shift with 2-4 JJO's assigned depending on the shift and activities occurring in the facility. Minimum staffing levels are three staff on the day shift, three staff on the swing shift and two on the graveyard shift. Meeting operational requirements for court and medical runs, as well as supervision of group activities requires the deployment of four JJO's on the day and swing shifts. This staff is supplemented by the temporary/non-permanent staff that can be used as needed. Additionally, the probation staff housed at the facility can be utilized to assist with certain tasks such as transportation of youth.

The Superintendent and the Unit Supervisor reported that the transportation of youth to court, appointments and movement to other facilities or living situations is a constant task that impacts the availability of staff. The availability of the temporary/non-permanent staff greatly assists in staffing these types of assignments.

**Physical Plant:** The facility is relatively new, constructed and opened in 2000. The housing for the youth is contained in two wings that are immediately adjacent to a large day room. One wing has 4 secure rooms and also serves as work-out space as it has several pieces of exercise equipment. The other wing has 11 secure rooms. Both genders are housed on the wings primarily due to the fact that the facility frequently houses more than four girls.

The facility has large accessible adjacent outdoor recreational and program space that is fenced, well-lit, and monitored by video surveillance systems. The outdoor spaces are large, open and adaptable for most outdoor recreational activities. There is also an area reserved for a garden and other related activities. The facility also has a large classroom.

Projected capital improvements for all State owned and operated facilities address the deferred maintenance that is required to keep the buildings safe and secure and in good condition. The capital improvements listed in Table 7 represent projected needs based on annual condition audits completed by DHSS's Facilities Section. Once audits are completed and deferred maintenance projects identified and vetted, they are prioritized using an industry accepted prioritization formula in order to request capital funds from the Legislature.

Table 7: Mat-Su Youth Facility Capital Improvement Program

Project	Description	Cost
Direct Digital Controls Upgrade	Upgrade the Direct Digital Control system for the Heating and Ventilation.	\$ 66,160
Kitchen Exhaust Fan Installation	After the recent installation of several kitchen appliances, the area requires an exhaust fan to be installed.	\$ 51,274
No Climb Fencing Installation	Install additional no-climb fencing in the recreation yard and provide full coverage on the perimeter fence.	\$ 51,274
Detention Flooring Upgrade	Install rubber flooring over the existing concrete in the detention common areas.	\$ 43,004
Heating and Ventilation Analysis and Balancing	Perform an analysis of the heating and ventilation system.	\$ 43,004
Vinyl Composite Tile Replacement	Replace vinyl composite floor tile in the probation areas of the facility. Areas include the intake, kitchen and the school.	\$ 34,734
Kitchen Plumbing and Grease Trap Installation	Update the drain and supply plumbing at the 3 compartment sink and grease trap	\$ 33,080
Domestic Plumbing Supply Repair	Replace sections of domestic copper supply lines that are developing pin hole leaks.	\$ 24,810
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 347,340</b>

**Population Management:** The facility has averaged 135 admissions per year since FY2005. Data on resident population characteristics for FY2016 follow:

- Number of unduplicated youth admitted: 126
- Percentage of Admissions that are transfers from other Division facilities, including treatment programs: 14 percent
- Percentage of male/female youth admitted: 87 percent male and 13 percent female
- Average length of stay: 41 days
- Percentage of youth that leave detention and go home: 45 percent
- Percentage of youth that left detention and went to another secure facility: 22 percent
- Percentage of youth that leave detention and go to foster homes and or non-secure residential housing: 5 percent
- Percentage that have been in detention previously: 28 percent
- Percentage that come into detention on probation violations: 33 percent



On an infrequent basis, the facility will receive a youth who has a major offense and will be in detention for an extended period.

**Programs:** The facility's mission and its operational and program philosophy is built around the restorative justice principles, including

- Responsibility for behavior by holding juvenile offenders accountable for their behavior
- Promote the safety and restoration of victims and communities
- Assist offenders and their families in developing skills to prevent crime

This approach stresses community services and mentoring. As such the Mat-Su community is very active in providing services and programs to the youth assigned to the facility. Primary programs provided include:

- Recreational Therapy group
- Life Skills group
- Thinking Errors group
- Social Skills group
- Applied Life and Career Skills group
- Transitional Planning
- Linking to Vocational Rehabilitation Services when applicable
- Religious/Spiritual Group- offered, but not required
- Regular and Summer School

Foremost among these programs appeared to be the school programs provided through the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. Through this partnership the Mat-Su Borough school district administers a comprehensive education program to the youth assigned to Mat-Su Youth Facility.

The school district provides a full-time teacher and one teacher assistant through a contract that services the facility through a 260-day school year contract. The points of emphasis in the program are remedial education since most of the youth are two or more years behind academically. The education staff provides instruction in the basic academic areas while also assisting youth to finish high school.

There appeared to be a very strong relationship with the local school district who clearly support the mission and purpose of the facility. To assist the teacher in achieving the education goals, the facility normally places one of the JJO staff in the classroom during the periods of instruction.



The Positive Alternatives for Continuing Education (PACE) project also appears to be a positive partnership that the facility has developed with volunteers from the community.

With the facility located in an accessible location to its client population, visitation is an important component of the program offerings. Staff report that a high percentage of parents visit youth during their stay at the facility. Normal visiting hours are Wednesday and Sunday 6:30 - 7:30PM. The facility will adjust the hours for those that cannot make the normal schedule or arrange for video visiting.

As part of a strong volunteer program at the facility, Mat-Su Youth Facility utilizes numerous individuals in the community to support religious instruction and education. The facility has volunteers from several denominations that provide Bible study, religious counseling, and religious instruction. The facility also utilizes local and regional treatment providers including the Boys and Girls Clubs.

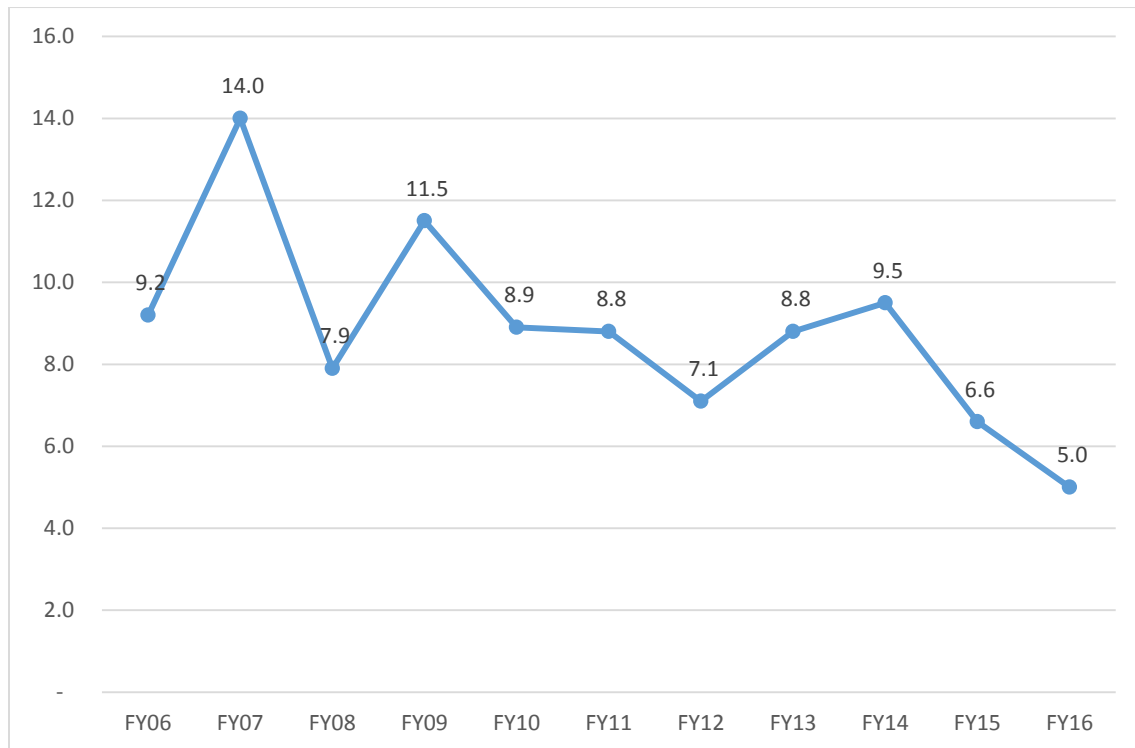
***Health Care:*** Medical services are provided at Mat-Su Youth Facility by one full-time registered nurse. Contractual agreements provide access to physician, dental and mental health services including a psychiatrist. Through an on-call system the nurse combined with contractual health care staff insure that the facility has medical response coverage 24 hour per day.

## Nome Youth Facility

The Nome Youth Facility is a 14 bed detention center for males and females. It provides supervision, education, rehabilitation, and mental health services for accused youth from the communities of Nome, Kotzebue and over 28 surrounding villages that are located in the large northwest region of Alaska. The facility originally opened in 1982 as a 6 bed facility and was remodeled/expanded in 2005. As shown in Figure 6, the facility operated at full capacity in FY 2007 and has since seen a steady drop in the population. The 2016 average occupancy rate was 36 percent of capacity.



Figure 6: Nome Youth Facility ADP, 2006 – 2016



Given the size and configuration of the facility, operating costs are relatively fixed. Staffing costs make up over 90 percent of the FY 2017 General Fund operating budget, which totals \$2,633,200. Table 8 shows the daily costs per youth at the facility.

Table 8: Nome Costs per Day, FY 2014 – FY 2016

	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Total Spending	\$ 2,980,181	\$ 2,937,940	\$ 2,813,217
Capacity	14	14	14
ADP	9.48	6.60	5.00
Cost per Day per Youth	\$ 861.27	\$ 1,219.57	\$ 1,541.49

As of September, 2016 the facility housed six males and one female. Residents are typically Alaska Native youth. Release data from 2016 shows that 35 of the 37 youth released from the facility were Alaska Native.

**Facility Operations:** The facility has a modest security system with a control panel option for the front entry door only. The facility has ample camera coverage inside and exterior to the building. Facility staff report no security related contraband has been identified for at least the last three years.

**Staffing:** The official organization chart for the Nome Youth Facility, updated as of June 1, 2016 authorizes 18 full time positions for the facility as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Nome Youth Facility Authorized staffing by Position

Position	FTE's
Superintendent	1
Unit Supervisor	1
Mental Health Clinician	1
Juvenile Justice Officer III (shift supervisor)	3
Juvenile Justice Officer I/II	10
Nurse II	1
Journeyman Level Maintenance Generalist	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

Minimum daily staffing is 3 staff for the day shift, 3 for the swing shift, and 2 for the graveyard shift. Each shift must have a shift supervisor and at least one female officer assigned. The superintendent, unit supervisor and mental health clinician normally work 8:00-5:00, Monday thru Friday and are not considered in the count for minimum staffing. These minimum staff levels are appropriate given the range of responsibilities assigned to staff, but result in very high staff to resident ratios, given the facility population levels. The level of community engagement outside the facility is unique to the Nome Youth Facility. While of great benefit to the residents, the amount of supervision of youth in the community does place additional strain on staff resources.

**Facility Physical Plant:** The facility presented as very well maintained and clean, However, the age of the facility and impact of the harsh climate has taken a toll on the facility. Regular investment in maintenance projects is critical to avoid substantial deterioration in the physical plant. The Division has identified and requested \$1,064,927 in needed improvements to the facility.

The most significant need is for a roof replacement. The 2005 facility remodeling reportedly used inappropriate roofing material that results in some difficulty when there is heavy rain and/or snow.

Projected capital improvements for all State owned and operated facilities address the deferred maintenance that is required to keep the buildings safe and secure and in good condition. The capital improvements listed in Table 10 are represent projections based on annual condition audits completed by the Departments Facilities Section. Once audits are completed and deferred maintenance projects identified and vetted, they are prioritized using an industry accepted prioritization formula in order to request capital funds from the Legislature.

Table 10: Nome Youth Facility Capital Improvements

Project	Description	Cost
Roof Re-Structure & Replacement	Roof Design is causing major ice damage. Needs slope changes including drainage modifications to alleviate ice buildup on exterior siding and surfaces.	\$ 367,188
Flooring Replacement	Replace worn and damages resilient flooring and carpeting throughout the facility.	\$ 114,660
Sandblast/Paint the Steel Thermo Piling	Sand blast & paint the thermo siphon piling. Grade to level areas around piling that have frost heaved.	\$ 87,053
Fire Alarm Upgrades	Replace the fire alarm system as it has become deficient and reached the end of its useful life.	\$ 66,161
Window & Interior Wall Repair	The exterior windows show signs of moisture infiltration at the interior walls due to the ice dams that occur on yearly. Repair wall finishes on interior after roof is replaced and gutters are installed.	\$ 53,747
Fuel Tank Replacement	Replace the above ground fuel storage tank.	\$ 45,900
Paint Exterior Walls	Re-painting Main Building and Workshop exterior walls is required to prevent further deterioration.	\$ 44,789
Roof Gutters and Downspouts- Installation	Install rain gutters and heat trace to eliminate ice damming at roof edge.	\$ 41,206
Wall Openings - Security Glass Upgrade	An upgrade of security glass is recommended for the facility reception desk and access to Probation offices and the Detention Unit.	\$ 37,623
Exterior Stair Construction Repair	Repair the main entrance exterior stairs and access ramps.	\$ 30,367
Grease Trap Replacement	Install grease trap in kitchen sanitary waste line.	\$ 23,290
Duct Cleaning	The air distribution duct work is in need of cleaning.	\$ 21,857
Drain Plumbing & Soffit Repair	Repair drain pipe leakage and replace damaged soffits caused by leaks.	\$ 21,763
Exterior Door & Hardware Replacement	Replace front and rear entrance door hardware. Install magnetic locking devices on front entryway.	\$ 19,152
Nurses Office Door Installation	The nurse's office cannot be locked. Recommend installing a door and infilling adjacent wall opening to create secure record storage.	\$ 17,916
Glycol Makeup System Replacement	Replace the glycol makeup system for boiler.	\$ 14,799
Perimeter Gravel Regrading	Gravel surfaces are in need of re-grading so that storm water and snow/ice melt may be diverted away from the facility's foundation.	\$ 11,556
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 1,004,014</b>

**Population Management:** The Nome Youth Facility has averaged 72 admissions per year since FY2005. Data on resident population characteristics for FY2016 follow:



- Number of unduplicated youth admitted: 36
- Percentage of male/female youth admitted: 83 percent male and 17 percent female
- Percentage of Admissions that are transfers from other Division facilities, including treatment programs: 23 percent
- Average length of stay: 43 days
- Percentage of youth that leave detention and go home: 46 percent
- Percentage that left detention and went to another secure facility: 43 percent
- Percentage that leave detention and go to foster homes and or non-secure residential housing: 5 percent
- Percentage that have been in detention previously: 44 percent
- Percentage that come into Detention on Probation Violations: 21 percent

Nome Youth Facility consistently has the largest population of Alaska Native youth in the Division. In 2015, a total of 1,290 Alaska Native youth were admitted to youth facilities, with the largest number of Alaska Native youth admitted to Nome. This represents approximately 42 percent of the total youth admissions.

During FY 2016 there were 43 youth admitted to the facility. Of those 36 admits, 19 (53 percent) were placed on an elevated suicide status. The Division's approach to suicide prevention is discussed in Chapter 6 of this report.

With the Nome Court nearby, youth are quickly and easily transported to their hearings. They must be seen by a judge within 48 hours and often stay in increments of 30 days as they move through the justice process. On occasion the facility has housed youth accused of more serious crimes for much longer periods of time. In-person parental visits are infrequent, reportedly related to the difficulty of traveling to and from Nome, as there are no roads connecting the various northwest region villages. Parents can visit through video-conferencing on the facility's computer system. Special visits can also be scheduled if the parents travel to Nome.

Nome also presents as a very unique facility in that staff do not use room confinement as a consequence for behavior and rather rely on positive reinforcement when a youth is acting out and or needs a "time out." This unconventional detention program provides youthful offenders with substantial time out in the community. At a minimum, staff and residents leave the facility five times per week performing scheduled community service, which includes planting flowers, picking up trash, snow removal, setting up/cleaning up for various community events, and assisting Alaska Native elders with fish camp cleanup. In addition, youth have access to physical fitness programs at the local recreation center, swimming pool, and outdoor parks. Fishing trips, camping, bike rides, hikes and ice fishing are among the outdoor activities. Social interaction takes place at the local Boys and Girls Club.



**Programs:** The Nome Youth Facility offers a thorough complement of youth friendly and culturally sensitive programs, including:

- On admission, “Why Am I Here” Journal
- Group “12 Teachings of Native Youth”
- Group “12 Teachings of Native Youth”
- Group “Abuse or Addiction” – substance abuse
- Community Work Service
- Cultural Values/Experience Group
- Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teen Life Skills Group
- Culture Camp
- Power of Choice groups
- Anger Management Groups
- Arctic Survival / Wilderness Education
- Religious/Spiritual group– offered, but not required
- Linking to Vocational Rehabilitation Services when applicable
- Regular and Summer School

The primary program offered at Nome is education. The facility has one fulltime school teacher with credentials Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. There is also one fulltime teacher’s aide. Every resident is required to attend school. The facility also works with Nome Public Schools in providing access to classes for youth who have been expelled or are serving long term suspensions.

The facility also offers educational therapeutic groups, violence prevention, positive life skills, therapeutic-based recreation on the climbing wall, and the President’s Physical Fitness Challenge. The Northwestern Alaska Career and Technical Center (NACTEC) provides classes at their school, including welding, carpentry, and heavy equipment operation.

It should also be noted that the milieu of the facility reflects efforts by the staff to be sensitive and inclusive of Inupiat culture.

A work program is available to every resident at Nome Youth Facility who is there long enough and has behavior warranting a job opportunity. There are five job positions including dishwasher, laundry person and three maintenance positions that cover all aspects of cleaning the facility such as dumping trash, mopping floors, vacuuming the carpets, and cleaning the bathrooms. The residents perform all of the cleaning duties in the facility under the supervision, guidance, and assistance of staff.

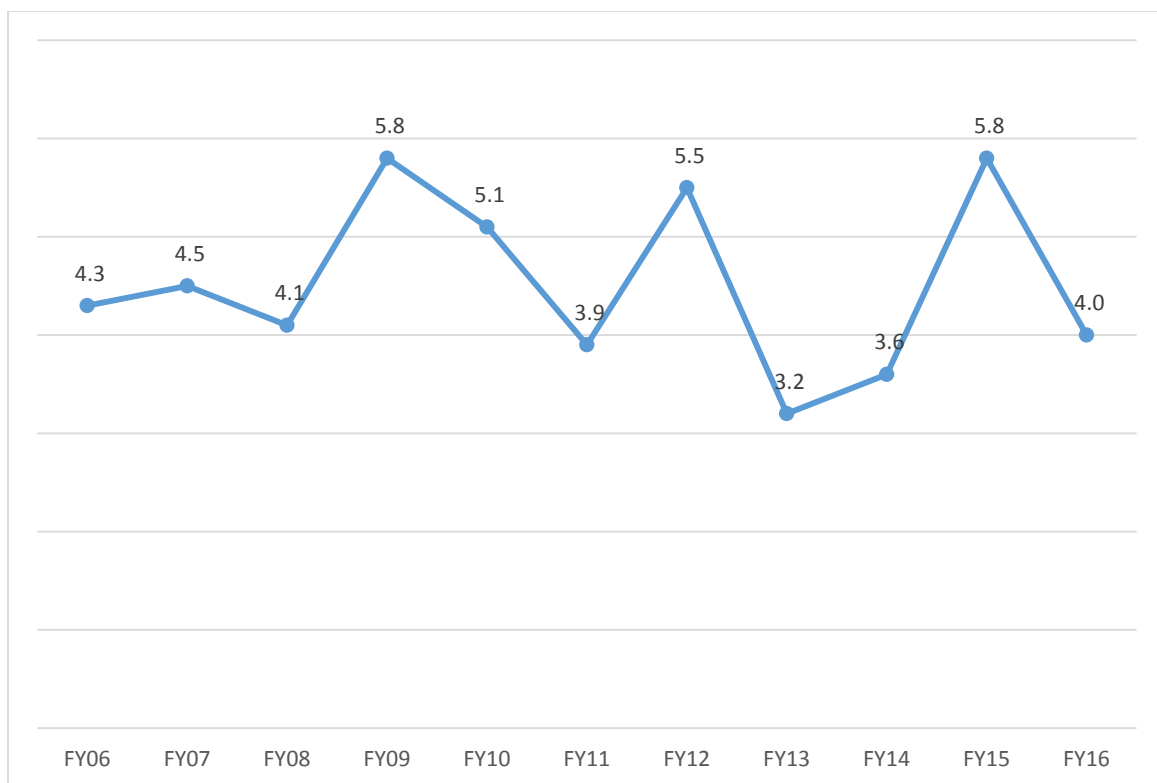
**Health Care:** The facility has one fulltime nurse position (currently vacant), one on-call non-perm-nurse position (currently vacant), and one contract physician. The physician visits the facility a minimum of one time per week and more often as needed. The local hospital, Norton Sound Health Corporation (NSHC), provides off-site medical, dental and pharmaceutical services as needed. A contract psychiatrist visits every six weeks and is available by phone as needed.

Nome is the only short-term detention facility that has a full-time Mental Health Clinician on staff. The clinician holds therapeutic sessions with each resident at least once per week and up to daily for those in crisis.

## Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility

The Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility was opened in 2003 and closed by Division of Juvenile Justice on September 15, 2016. The facility had a 10 bed capacity, but averaged 4.5 residents since FY 2006, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Ketchikan Average Daily Population, 2006 – 2016



Because of this low utilization rate, average daily costs per youth were high, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Ketchikan Cost per Day, 2014-2016

	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Total Spending	\$ 2,058,860	\$ 1,878,101	\$ 1,845,441
Capacity	8.0	8.0	10.0
ADP	3.62	5.80	4.00
Cost per Day per Youth	\$ 1,558.21	\$ 887.15	\$ 1,264.00

Ketchikan was the smallest Division of Juvenile Justice facility and consistently had the lowest resident count of the Division's detention facilities and lowest occupancy rate. Given the facility's closure, there was no opportunity to review the operation of the facility.

However, the project team did meet with a number of local stakeholders in Ketchikan to assess the impact of the closure of the facility. Interview subjects included Karl Amylon, City Manager; Joel Jackson, Akeela Regional Director; Kurt Lindeman, Revilla High School Principal, and Judge William Carey. All expressed significant concern regarding the negative impact to local youth caused by the closure of the facility. Specific impacts included:

- **Lack of access to legal counsel.** With the relocation of the facility's residents to Juneau, meaningful and timely contact with legal counsel becomes much more difficult. This will likely result in youth remaining in detention for longer periods of time.
- **Reduced access to courts.** The local court will no longer be able to readily meet with youth in person to assess their cases and treatment needs. This in effect impairs the effectiveness of the juvenile court in addressing these cases.
- **Lack of access to family and community.** Maintaining social connections is critical to rehabilitation. The distance of Juneau from Ketchikan makes maintaining these ties problematic. Linkages to local community agencies to facilitate reentry into the community are also weakened.
- **No facilities to hold youth for trials.** In the event of trial, there are no facilities available locally to detain youth for the duration of the proceedings.
- **Diminished public safety.** The lack of a local detention alternative may result in youth that need to be detained, being left in the community as the least "bad" alternative.

In the judgement of these stakeholders, the primary impact of the closure of the Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility will be worse outcomes for at-risk youth in contact with the local justice system.

## 6. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Recommendation 4: The Division should develop a comprehensive plan for mental health service delivery in detention facilities that defines service objectives, establishes specific strategies to achieve these objectives, and measures system performance.

### *Key Findings*

- *Over half of all youth admitted to Division of Juvenile Justice detention facilities have a diagnosable mental health/substance use disorder.*
- *Division of Juvenile Justice policy places appropriate emphasis on screening and identification of youth at risk of suicide.*
- *Given the magnitude of mental health service needs in the population, current Division staff resources strain to fully address the clinical requirements presented by youth admitted to detention, particularly at Mat-Su and Kenai. These facilities need access to additional, consistent staff resources to work with probation and provide mental health treatment to youth including reviews of youth requiring suicide precautions, interventions for youth requiring suicide precautions, mental health assessment and diagnosis, group therapies and treatment readiness for detained youth, and transition services.*
- *Unit staff are well trained in managing youth with mental health issues and engage in consistent positive interaction with youth. In all three facilities visited, it was apparent that facility staff spent a great deal of time interacting with the youth in a positive manner.*
- *The Division of Juvenile Justice lacks a comprehensive plan that defines mental health service objectives for the short-term detention units, establishes an overall strategy to meet these objectives, and identifies measures of progress toward their attainment.*

Division of Juvenile Justice data show that in 2015, 650 youth (55.6 percent) in a survey pool of a total of 1,167 youth were identified as having a mental health diagnosis. In the same year, a total of 2,118 unique juveniles were referred to the agency.

Per a review of the literature, Desai et al. indicated “in a review of decades of research on psychiatric disorders in children...prevalence rates for current psychiatric disorders were estimated to be 16.5 percent in adolescents...as many as 65 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable psychiatric or substance abuse ..<sup>16</sup> In a 2009 study of psychiatric symptoms among juveniles incarcerated in adult prison, Murrie et. al concluded, “although the mental health needs of youth in the juvenile justice system are well documented, this study reveals that mental health needs appear to be even more pronounced in the small subgroup of youths transferred to the adult criminal

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<sup>16</sup> Desai, R. & Goulet, J., et al. (2006). Mental health care in juvenile detention facilities: A review. *Journal of American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*. 34. 204-214.



justice system and incarcerated in adult prison...the few youths who the criminal justice system selects for incarceration in adult prison appear to be a group particularly in need of psychiatric treatment.”<sup>17</sup>

Given estimates in the literature that 65 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health/substance use disorder, it is likely that the number of youth referred to Alaska’s juvenile justice system in need of mental health/psychiatric services in 2015 approached 1,376 individuals. The fact that many youths have relatively short lengths of stay, complicates identification of youth with mental health needs.

## Suicide Prevention

In Alaska, suicide is the leading cause of death for individuals aged 15 to 24 years. Suicide death rates in Alaska are far greater than national rates. For example, per 2014 data from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the suicide rate per 100,000 persons was 21.97 in Alaska compared to 12.93 nationally.<sup>18</sup> On average, one person dies by suicide every two days in Alaska. Suicide rates in American Indian/ Alaska Native youth ages 15 to 24 are far higher than any other ethnic group. Given the number of Alaska Native youth (42 percent of 2015 referrals to the facilities) suicide risk is especially great.

It is well documented that the initial period of incarceration (e.g. first hours) are the highest risk period for suicidal ideation and self-injurious behavior. Hayes and Rowan found that 50 percent of incarcerated individuals who complete suicide do so within the first twenty-four hours of confinement, with 28.5 percent of those events occurring within the first three hours.<sup>19</sup> In a suicide prevention policy outlined by Hayes, screening for suicide risk should occur immediately upon confinement and prior to housing assignment.<sup>20</sup> The ability to reduce suicide completion with screening immediately upon contact utilizing identified suicide risk factors has been shown to be highly effective in preventing suicide.

The prevalence of suicide is higher for youthful offenders when compared to non-incarcerated youth.<sup>21</sup> Risk factors associated with increased rates of suicide in youthful offenders included age (i.e., below age 21 years), presence of a psychiatric disorder, pre-existing history of emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse, prior verbal reports of suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, or suicidal gestures, institutional stressors (e.g., unit placement, work assignment, disciplinary confinement, interpersonal conflicts, legal processes, and parole setbacks), and psychosocial stressors (e.g., loss of a loved one,

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<sup>17</sup> Murrie, D. & Henderson, C., et al. (2010). Psychiatric symptoms among juveniles incarcerated in adult prison. *Psychiatric Services*, 60. 1092-1097

<sup>18</sup> Suicide: 2016 Facts & Figures. (2016). American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Retrieved from <http://www.afsp.org>

<sup>19</sup> Hayes, L.M. & Rowan, J.R. (1988). National study of jail suicides: Seven years later, National Center on Institutions and Alternatives.

<sup>20</sup> Hayes, L.M. (2011). Follow-Up Report on Suicide Prevention Practices Within the Massachusetts Department of Correction. National Center on Institutions and Alternatives.

<sup>21</sup> Metzner, J.L. (2002). Class action litigation in correctional psychiatry. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law*, 30, 19-29.

mental conditions).<sup>22</sup> Of deaths involving youthful offenders, 67 percent of the deaths during incarceration were attributed to suicide.<sup>23</sup>

There are few large scale studies regarding suicidal ideation or the requirement of suicide precautions in juvenile detention facilities. As reviewed by Abram et al. in 2014, "Findings from previous studies of detained youth vary widely. Current prevalence rates of suicidal ideation in this population vary from 14.2 percent to 51 percent."<sup>24</sup>

Taken together, the risk of suicide in Alaska, the risk of suicide in Alaska Native youth, and the risk of suicide in detained juveniles all indicate that this is a very serious issue. Division of Juvenile Justice policy, "Suicide Prevention and Intervention," requires that youth are screened for mental health issues and suicide risk within one hour of admission to the facility. The policy appropriately includes protections and special procedures for youth who appear to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs or who are belligerent, violent, or otherwise uncooperative upon admission. If youth are determined to be at risk, the policy delineates levels of observation and procedures for ongoing monitoring. The policy also requires an initial assessment and a minimum of every other day contact with a mental health clinician during the period of enhanced supervision. Youth who are assessed and placed on Suicide High Status are re-assessed at least every 24 hours. Youth placed on Suicide Low Status are reassessed at least every 48 hours. All youth are observed while in their rooms in 15 minute intervals. Youth on High Suicide status are checked more frequently.

Youth on suicide precautions require regular, consistent mental health treatment. This includes the development and implementation of a treatment plan to address the underlying reasons for the youth's suicidal ideation, treatment needs during the period of increased risk, as well as follow up treatment interventions and monitoring strategies to reduce the risk of relapse.<sup>25</sup> Division mental health counselors, by policy, develop Safety Plans for youth on suicide status that covers the following topics: future orientation/goals; support people they can talk to; coping skills; what staff can do to relieve youth stress; personal strengths; and protective factors.

Table 12 shows the number and percent of unique juveniles admitted to each facility requiring suicide precautions in a given year. Both Nome and Kenai have very high numbers of new admissions placed on suicide precaution status.

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<sup>22</sup> Hayes, L.M. (2004). Juvenile suicide in confinement: A national study. National Center of Institutions and Alternatives; Wasserman, G.A., Ko, S.J., & McReynolds, L.S. (August 2004). Assessing the mental health status of youth in juvenile justice settings. Juvenile Justice Bulletin, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; Daniel, A.E. (2006). Preventing suicide in prison: A collaborative responsibility of administrative, custodial, and clinical staff. Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and Law, 34: 165-75; Abram, K., Choe, J., Washburn, J., Teplin, L., King, D., Dulcan, M., & Bassett, E. (2014). Suicidal thoughts and behaviors among detained youth. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

<sup>23</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics. (2001). Health care for children and adolescents in the juvenile correctional care system. Pediatrics, 107(4), 799-803.

<sup>24</sup> Abram, K., Choe, B.A., Washburn, J., Teplin, L., King, D., Dulcan, M. (2008). Suicidal ideation and behaviors among youth in juvenile detention. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 47(3): 291-300.

<sup>25</sup> Hayes, L.M. (2004); Wasserman, G.A., (August 2004); Daniel, A.E. (2006); Abram, K., (2008).

Table 12: Youth Requiring Suicide Precautions

	2014			2015			2016		
Facility	Admits	# on suicide precaution	% on suicide precaution	Admits	# on suicide precaution	% on suicide precaution	Admits	# on suicide precaution	% on suicide precaution
Mat-Su	91	10	11%	104	19	18.3%	99	17	17.2%
Nome	47	26	55.3%	49	23	46.9%	36	19	52.8%
Kenai	49	18	36.7%	51	26	50.9%	60	24	40.0%

## Resources

Current psychiatric resources at the three detention facilities are limited. Kenai has a contract psychiatrist that visits the facility every four to six weeks. In addition, some services are provided via tele-health. The facility also has a nurse on staff 27 hours per week. At the Nome Youth Facility, the psychiatrist visits the facility every six to eight weeks, but is available for telephone consultation as needed. Nome is also the only facility with a full-time mental health treatment professional on staff. The facility also has a full-time nurse position and non-permanent nurse position on staff. At the Mat-Su Youth Facility, services are provided by a psychiatric nurse practitioner. The provider visits the facility monthly. This facility also has a full time nurse on staff.

The Division does have treatment alternatives for youth with exacerbations of serious mental illness. For those youth who have mental health symptoms requiring inpatient psychiatric treatment, the facilities are able to access treatment at North Star Behavioral Health or the Alaska Psychiatric Institute. These facilities however, are not always accessible to youth detained in Division facilities

As two of the facilities (Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility and Mat-Su Youth Facility) do not currently have full-time mental health clinicians on staff, it is not possible for youth to be immediately or regularly reviewed by mental health professionals while on enhanced supervision due to suicidal ideation. Mat-Su, by virtue of its proximity to Anchorage, does have some direct access to mental health clinicians when needed. There have also been instances where Mat-Su probation staff have called the McLaughlin Youth Center mental health clinician to indicate a high risk youth needing assessment, resulting in the mental health clinician driving to Mat-Su to ensure a face-to-face assessment in a timely manner.

However, the mental health clinicians can be immediately available via videoconferencing, which they use for regular contact with the facilities. Mental health staff from McLaughlin Youth Center assess youth via telephone or video conferencing. This strategy, while a function of limited resources, is not an adequate approach to management of these youth. Youth on suicide precautions require regular, consistent mental health treatment. This includes the development and implementation of a treatment plan to address the underlying reasons for the youth's suicidal ideation, treatment needs during the

period of increased risk, as well as follow up treatment interventions and monitoring strategies to reduce the risk of relapse.<sup>26</sup>

In order to determine the adequacy of these resources, it is necessary to assess mental health program requirements, and ensure that there are sufficient psychiatric hours to cover the clinical requirements. Given the relatively short length of stay of most residents, these requirements could include more frequent initial psychiatric evaluations, as well as monthly medication review. The quantity of follow ups would be dependent on individual need for medication and length of stay. It is not clear that current facility resources, as described above, are sufficient to meet these basic clinical responsibilities.

Given the paucity of mental health resources available, specifically at Kenai and Mat-Su, there is concern regarding unidentified and untreated youth, and a corresponding absence of therapeutic modalities outside of psychotropic medication. This concern is amplified by data indicating that in 2014, of 650 youth identified as having mental health disorders, 21 percent or 136 were dually diagnosed with substance use disorders.

Both Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility and Mat-Su Youth Facility are in need of consistent mental health staff who could work with probation and provide mental health treatment to youth including reviews of youth requiring suicide precautions, interventions for youth requiring suicide precautions, mental health assessment and diagnosis, group therapies and treatment readiness for detained youth, and transition services.

Given the small size of the facilities, the Division could consider sharing psychiatric treatment providers with other juvenile justice facilities, or contracting with one provider to perform regularly scheduled onsite and tele-health psychiatry clinics on a more frequent basis. Nurse practitioners reportedly can practice independently in Alaska. The agency could consider recruiting psychiatric nurse practitioners to provide psychotropic medication management. This may provide more consistent services, allow the prescribing practitioner to engage in treatment planning with other staff, improve treatment integration, and reduce spending. Finally, youth requiring diagnostic assessment and/or psychological testing are receiving those services in the community. The cost of these contracted services is often significant. Some of these services, specifically diagnostic and substance abuse assessments could be provided by an in-house clinician.

## Mental Health Treatment

Data indicates that youth detained in the three detention facilities have a myriad of diagnoses. Despite the short-term stays of most of the population, youth can spend lengthy period of time in these facilities. Currently, the facilities do not offer a formal mental health treatment program. Per all staff interviewed, "treatment" is not offered in the facilities due to defense counsel concerns that providing treatment to youth would in essence result in adjudication. For example, one premise of sex offender treatment is that the offender must acknowledge their actions and review their behaviors in the context

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<sup>26</sup> National Commission on Correctional Health Care. (2015). Standards for Health Services in Juvenile Detention and Confinement Facilities.

of the offense. This would be counterproductive to the youth's defense. As such, defense counsel concerns regarding treatment for youth prior to adjudication are understandable

Outside of treatment, youth do receive limited mental health services. Mental health clinicians can and do offer crisis intervention counseling when needed, and meet with youth in detention not in crisis, but simply wanting to talk. Staff also facilitate family contact and support, and assist with mental health suicide self-harm assessments.

More advanced services however, could be provided so long as the treatment is not offense specific. For example, youth can be taught therapeutic skills (e.g. cognitive behavioral skills, dialectical behavioral skills, anxiety reduction, substance use treatment interventions, impulse control techniques) that are not specific to an offense, but rather teaches necessary life skills and/or prepares them to engage in more specific therapeutic interventions should this be required post adjudication.

In all facilities, there were youth diagnosed with and treated with medications to address mental health disorders. In these cases, the youth should be provided with education regarding their medication and specific mental health disorder. As all three facilities have nursing staff, this could be incorporated into nursing duties and provided in a group format to youth.

Nome Youth Facility is the only facility with full time mental health clinician on site. As such, mental health issues were better addressed and crisis intervention services were readily available. In addition, youth were being taught coping skills and staff training regarding trauma informed care and suicide prevention was ongoing. Substance abuse groups utilizing curriculum from "The Change Companies" was being provided by mental health clinician's on a weekly basis. Juvenile Justice staff were providing additional substance abuse interventions, creative art interactions, teaching positive relationships, and art survival.

On a more limited basis, the mental health clinicians that travel to Mat-Su and Kenai provide training on Trauma Informed Care, Suicide Refresher Training, the Seven Challenges course. These staff are also available for ongoing consultation as well.

Facility line staff appear well trained and versed in trauma informed care and milieu therapy. Trauma Informed Care as defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) requires that a "program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures and practices; and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization."<sup>27</sup> A trauma informed approach to care requires adherence to six key principles: safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment, voice and choice, and recognizes cultural, historical, and gender issues. There are various treatment interventions that are trauma informed and have been used in various systems. Two

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<sup>27</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: 2014.



treatment programs that may be familiar and that are frequently utilized in juvenile correctional settings include Seeking Safety and The Sanctuary Model.

Milieu Therapy is essentially the exposure of an individual to an environment that is therapeutic and structured. An individual's environment is structured to allow them to engage in and experience effectiveness of specific therapeutic interventions.

As such, the milieu on each of the units resembled a therapeutic treatment environment. Staff were noted interacting with youth. Youth interviewed indicated that staff were helpful and spent time talking with them about their issues.

Although milieu therapy is important, youth also need other targeted interventions. Facility staff interviewed indicated that they were trained to provide ART (Aggression Replacement Training) and a group curriculum entitled "Prime for Life." Staff at KYPF and Mat-Su Youth Facility indicated that these groups were not provided with regularity. For example, at Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility staff reported that "Prime for Life" had not been provided in over a year, and that the most recent ART group was held over a month prior. There was reportedly no set time in the youth's daily schedule for skills groups.

## Substance Abuse Treatment

In a sample of youth committed to juvenile justice facilities, the Policy Research Associates found that 64.5 percent of youth met criteria for a substance use disorder.<sup>28</sup> According to the 2012-2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 12.07 percent of Alaskan youth used illicit drugs in a month compared to the national average of 9.54 percent. From 2001-2011 18.2 percent of juvenile arrests were reportedly related to illicit substances.<sup>29</sup> Alcohol and marijuana continue to be the drugs of choice for rural Alaskans. It is also recognized that alcohol use is a significant public health issue in Alaska with a higher prevalence in Native American populations.<sup>30</sup> Data provided by the Division revealed that in 2014, of 650 youth identified as having mental health disorders, 21 percent or 136 were diagnosed with substance use disorders. Given that a total of 1,167 youth were referred, it is likely that this number is much higher.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, Alaska has some of the highest rates of illicit drug use in the United States, with 10.1 percent of persons aged 12 or older engaged illicit drug use in the last month, as compared to 7.8 percent nationally.<sup>31</sup> When reviewing national juvenile justice data, Alaskan juvenile justice data, and the prevalence of substance use disorders in Alaska, it is obvious that significant attention must be given to the identification and treatment of substance use

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<sup>28</sup> Skowrya, K. & Coccozza, J. (2006). *Blueprint for Change: A Comprehensive Model for the Identification and Treatment of Youth with Mental Health Needs in Contact with the Juvenile Justice System*. The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. Policy Research Associates, Inc. Delmar, NY.

<sup>29</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Results from the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings*, NSDUH Series H-46, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 13-4795. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2013.

<sup>30</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Agency, *National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, 2014.

disorders. This must include the identification of acute intoxication, medical management of detoxification, and the initiation of substance abuse treatment.

Review of facility policy and procedure did not reveal documents regarding youth admitted with acute intoxication, other than delaying the completion of intake assessments, or regarding youth experiencing detoxification reactions. This should be addressed in policy and procedure.

As discussed above, at Nome Youth Facility, the mental health clinician provides a substance abuse group weekly. Currently, there is no active substance abuse treatment occurring at Kenai Peninsula Youth Facility. Mat-Su offers weekly Narcotics Anonymous meetings for all youth in detention.

## Behavioral Management Programming

Behavioral management programs can be an effective tool to encourage youth to maintain positive behavior, assuming that a youth understands the parameters of the expected behavior, is given rewards appropriate to their age and believed by the youth to be sufficiently beneficial to stimulate their desire to participate in the program.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the rewards must be consistently provided, and frequent in order to maintain the interest of the youth (i.e. small daily rewards that cumulate in a larger weekly reward). A behavioral management program that is inconsistently implemented is worse than no behavioral management program at all.

Youthful offenders require age/developmentally appropriate services inclusive of a structured behavioral management system, where there are expected predictable rewards for identified target behaviors and expected predetermined consequences for behavioral challenges. In addition, treatment or rehabilitative efforts are required.

To enable this behavior management program to be a positive, successful, program that encourages good behavior, the facility staff must ensure that the youth have a daily schedule that keeps them active and engaged in order to alleviate boredom and down time which increase behavioral challenges, to clearly define the expectations of the program and to encourage the youth with age appropriate rewards within a regular time frame that motivate youth to participate. It should be noted that over time, specific rewards become “stale” and youth are not motivated to work in order to earn them. As such, the reward menu should be regularly reviewed. In addition, if youth earn a specific reward, it must be provided, or youth will not respect the program and as a result, increased behavioral challenges may occur.

Youth were engaged in activity during the visits (e.g. attending school, playing ping pong, playing games, interacting with staff). The educational program at all three facilities appeared to be rich, with both youth and facility staff speaking positively about teachers and academic opportunities for the youth. Although only one of the facilities (Nome Youth Facility) had an indoor gym, all three facilities had exercise equipment and some staff used incentives to encourage youth to exercise (e.g. youth

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<sup>32</sup> California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. *Dialectical Behavior Therapy: Evidence for Implementation in Juvenile Correctional Settings*, 2011. Sacramento, CA: CDCR, Office of Research, Juvenile Justice Branch, 2011; Howell, James C., and Mark W. Lipsey. “Research-Based Guidelines for Juvenile Justice Programs.” *Justice Research and Policy* 14, no. 1 (2012): 17-34.



were able to listen to music via headphones as long as they were using the exercise equipment). Programs and activities among the facilities however appeared ad hoc, and have not been developed in a coordinated, consistent manner.

## System Policies & Service Delivery Plan

A sound system of mental health services for youth in secure detention should include initial screening and assessment, development of a service plan for those youth with mental health disorders, implementation of said service plan (to include both therapeutic interventions and pharmacological interventions), suicide prevention and intervention, and transition planning. In addition, facilities should determine what service modalities will be utilized so that facility staff can be trained in these interventions and model/support the skills that the youth are being taught on a day-to-day basis. The approach to delivery of these services should be formally stated and detailed in a written plan that includes goals for services, specific pathways to meet these goals, and data to be collected that will measure progress toward these goals.

The Division currently has a limited set of policies on mental health services, but lacks an overall service delivery plan as described above. Currently, the facilities have policy and procedure regarding Medication Management and Distribution, Suicide Prevention and Intervention, Mental Health Screening (MAYSI-2) and Transitional Services. It should be noted that the Transitional Services policy is geared toward the identified treatment facilities, rather than the detention facilities. As there is no current mental health treatment officially occurring in detention units, there were no policies regarding treatment services in these facilities. There are also no policies regarding psychiatric services.

A comprehensive service delivery plan should address the issues identified in this report, including regular review of youth requiring enhanced supervision due to suicidal ideation, resource requirements, treatment for adjudicated delinquent youth in detention, and services for detained youth in lieu of mental health treatment. The plan should address system goals, strategies for service delivery, resource allocations, and performance measurement. A good basic resource for the development of a mental health program would be standards promulgated by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care. The standards include essential requirements for mental health services in Juvenile Detention facilities.