

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Pete Ricketts, Governor

YRTC & Youth Facilities Initial Transition Plan

July 15, 2020

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Pete Ricketts
Governor

Dannette R. Smith
Chief Executive Officer

Helping People Live Better Lives

Executive Summary

Timeline overview

In October 2019, DHHS' business plan established the YRTC **system** as an approach to implement multiple **levels of care**, and set a framework to enhance **programming** specific to the various levels at each of the campuses. The plan established YRTC-Kearney as the hub for both male and female youth, the Lincoln Facility for high-acuity male and female youth, and the YRTC-Geneva campus as a re-entry program for female youth. If successful, the piloted re-entry program would be replicated for male youth on the Kearney campus.

The intent of the business plan was to achieve these goals while DHHS worked on next phase initiatives. Prior to DHHS opening of the Lincoln Facility and the YRTC-Geneva campus in late February, DHHS established a **Future State Planning Committee**, which met on February 6, 2020. During this meeting, the stakeholders reviewed the vision statements developed from sessions held in July and August of 2019, an overview of the business plan, and research of industry best practices. The stakeholders were also provided updates on several initiatives, including facility renovations and clinical programming plans. Prior to the meeting, stakeholders participated in a survey to provide input on next phase opportunities. Finally, stakeholders were provided a summary of two consulting firms that would conduct a deeper assessment of the system that would be used for long-term strategic and developmental planning. With input from the stakeholders, DHHS selected the Missouri Youth Services Institute (MYSI) to conduct the assessment and facilitate the strategic and operational planning.

DHHS engaged MYSI to conduct an initial assessment of the YRTC Kearney campus as the hub of the system. The assessment would include key personnel and stakeholder interviews, data analysis and organizational design – systems, processes, protocols, models and structure. Scheduled to commence March 1, the assessment was altered due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, requiring the interviews and data analysis to be conducted remotely. The assessment was limited to these activities, with the notion that future work would follow.

During this period, DHHS was also taking steps to strengthen its **clinical programming** model. DHHS established a new director-level position in March 2020, which would evaluate clinical programming and ensure seamless coordination of care planning and treatment across the system. This position is a critical starting point to revamping all the treatment programming, implementing new progression models and integrating individualized and family trauma therapy.

Also in March, DHHS entered into a contractual agreement with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) to provide leadership and administrative oversight for the YRTC and youth high schools. This move has been pivotal as DHHS establishes the YRTC school system, coordinates initiatives with the other residential youth high schools, and aligns technology initiatives across all campuses. The move has proven invaluable as NDE leadership has provided subject matter expertise and identified several gaps in the education system.

In response to multiple incidents on the Kearney campus, DHHS leadership implemented an action plan in February 2020 to address immediate concerns in security, emergency response, staff training and development, facility modifications, command and coordination with local law enforcement, and communication both internally and with local law enforcement.

Beginning on February 27, 2020, YRTC leadership (unit managers, medical director, therapists and administrators) in collaboration with juvenile probation, have been conducting case reviews of youth that have been in the system longer than 9 months. The goal of this process was to review the current treatment progress of each youth, and to determine the suitability for re-entry. This process was valuable for youth who were ready for re-entry, and allowed the facility to deliver enhanced care and re-calibration of the programming as a result of decreased census. Periodic case review of each youth will be a standard of care going forward.

The initiatives DHHS has worked on since releasing the business plan are critical to achieving the initial goals of establishing a system and enhancing the programming across the system. Equally important, these initiatives are important first steps to **shifting the culture** at each of the YRTC campuses and youth facilities with priority focus on **clinical therapy, rehabilitation and education**.

Next steps – addressing challenges and positioning for the future

The ultimate goal of the future state planning is to determine how best to position the youth services programs to meet the needs of Nebraska’s youth. This includes all **care points** across the **continuum of care**. DHHS will continue to work with the Committee to determine the system’s path forward, while continuing to position each facility and each program in preparation for this **future state**.

In order to best position itself for the future, DHHS must address several operational challenges that exist, while leveraging the capabilities of each campus.

Challenges and business needs:

- Maintaining operations at both the YRTC Geneva and Kearney campuses has historically been hampered by the ability to recruit and retain staff.
 - YRTC-Geneva staffing has been problematic for the last three years, including the most recent months since reopening as a transitional site for female youth.
 - YRTC-Geneva is struggling to maintain appropriate operational staffing levels of critical care staff.
 - YRTC-Kearney has had some success in recruiting staff; however, it has not been able to maintain staffing levels, based on most recent census levels.
- There is a significant need to recruit and develop appropriate staff with renewed emphasis on clinical therapy.
- There is an overwhelming desire from stakeholders to reinstate gender-designated campuses. This will ease operational coordination while enhancing clinical programming and education delivery.

Addressing these challenges will not only help achieve operational efficiencies, but assist in shifting the **culture** with focus on **therapy, treatment, and education**. DHHS has several **opportunities** to leverage the capabilities (staff and facilities) of all existing campuses in order to maximize resources and enhance care.

The following plan will better position YRTC System and other residential youth programs for future development, and transition into more community-based programming.

Facility Programming Summary

YRTC Geneva	YRTC Kearney	Lincoln Facility	HRC	Whitehall
Current Status				
Re-entry female youth	Hub, YRTC male and female youth	High-acuity male and female youth	Male youth with substance use disorder (SUD)	Male youth who sexually harm (YSH)
October 2020				
Close campus, move female programming to new HRC facilities	Hub, YRTC male youth only	Maintain <i>Future potential for PRTF for high mental health services, male and female youth</i>	Hub, YRTC female youth only	YSH and SUD male youth – completely separate programs and living spaces

Youth Facilities Transition Plan

- **Close the Geneva campus and relocate all female treatment programs to the Hastings Regional Center campus.**
 - Despite efforts to re-establish services in Geneva, staffing and location limit this campus as a sustainable option without severely impacting operational performance.
 - Geneva staff vacancy rate:
 1. 2018 25%
 2. 2019 24%
 3. 2020 58%
 - Geneva staff overtime: 218 hrs per pay period over the last twelve months
 - Geneva staff turnover rate:
 1. 2018 47%
 2. 2019 59%
 3. 2020 19%
 - Females would once again have their own campus with increased potential and capabilities.
 - The Hastings Regional Center (HRC) has two new buildings that can accommodate up to 24 residents in **individual rooms**.
 - HRC has stable, trained staff, allowing appropriate recruiting and flexibility in staffing.
 - Allows for more comprehensive female programming, to include adding a SUD program.
 - Hastings provides a broader level of community resources to support programming and youth re-entry.
 - Would have to evaluate the need for enhanced security, including possibly a secure fence.
 - The Geneva campus could be repurposed by the state, or the state could allow the city of Geneva to lease the building for community purposes.

➤ **Return YRTC-Kearney to a male-only campus with expanded, enhanced services.**

- The YRTC-Kearney campus has experienced a shift over the last few years towards more of a correctional centric focus. The on-going recruiting concerns, combined with a declining emphasis on education and clinical therapy, have contributed to this shift as well.

- **Kearney staff vacancy rate:**

1. 2018	22%
2. 2019	26%
3. 2020	31%

- **Kearney staff overtime: 961 hrs per pay period last twelve months**

- **Kearney staff turnover rate:**

4. 2018	46%
5. 2019	60%
6. 2020	25%

- Reducing the census (moving female youth off campus) will lessen the pressures on staffing, and allow for the opportunity to develop leadership and staff, and/or recruit as appropriate.
- Continued changes to the clinical programming and education initiatives will greatly enhance the much-needed cultural shift on the Kearney campus.
- Additional work with the Missouri Youth Services Institute (see summary page), a nationally recognized consulting group that developed the Missouri Model, will further aid in implementing program, paradigm, and desired cultural changes.

➤ **Maintain the mission of the Lincoln Facility – serving high-acuity male and female youth:**

- Since becoming operational in February 2020, the facility has been phasing in its staffing based on the treatment needs of our youth assigned to the facility.
- The staffing and therapy are in place, serving both male and female youth who have been clinically diagnosed to have higher mental health needs.
- The location is ideal, offering a closer proximity to Lancaster and Douglas Counties.
- The capacity of the facility is a total of 20 individual rooms in two separate pods (11 rooms and 9 rooms).
- Both the programming and physical structure are well-suited to meet the needs of this youth population. This facility does have the flexibility to shift its mission to a psychiatric residential treatment facility.

➤ **Designate the Whitehall Campus to serve both male SUD and YSH programs.**

- Reimbursement for both SUD and YSH services at Whitehall come from Medicaid and Probation for PRTF level of care.
- The average daily census over the last five years is 14 boys – there are appropriate recruiting capabilities and staffing to accommodate both programs.
- The capacity includes 4 cottages with 8-9 beds in each. Additionally there is a school that can accommodate up to 36 youth, a gym, a 4-bedroom home, a vocational rehab area, and 2 separate buildings being used for administration and DHHS Human Resources.
- The buildings on this campus are dated, structurally sound but in need of cosmetic changes and updating of surveillance system.
- Programming and housing for the SUD program will be completely separate from the YSH program.

Missouri Youth Services Institute (MYSI) summary

DHHS contracted with MYSI to conduct an on-site assessment beginning March 30, 2020. This process included a key stakeholder interviews, data analysis and documentation review. Due to COVID-19 and “stay at home” orders in Missouri, the process was limited to key stakeholder interviews (YRTC staff, juvenile probation, judges and community stakeholders), which accomplished via conference calls. The purpose of the interviews were to obtain strengths, weaknesses and their overall thoughts on the YRTCs. The findings of the Pre-Assessment were documented in a report dated April 13, 2020. These findings revealed several areas that needed to be addressed in revising current programmatic operations.

In order to develop an implementation plan for the YRTC male and female programs, MYSI is proposing a team of two (2) consultants to conduct an interview and assessment of the present operations and programs at the Kearney and Geneva (then Hastings) sites in order to prioritize the needs to be addressed. This would include extensive interviews with staff at all levels, and a representation of the youth and their families.

The MYSI consultants will travel weekly to the YRTC locations. They will be “boots on the ground,” working with both leadership and youth alike to model behavior and provide a structured learning environment, all with the goal to change the culture. MYSI will coach and mentor YRTC leadership and staff, including role playing, leading group meetings and engaging youth for development.

The MYSI team will work with DHHS to put into place recommendations for the physical layout of the facility; the necessary modifications to make the units youth friendly; the size and types of groups into the units; the staffing patterns and the utilization of staff, and the development of an overall therapeutic group treatment process for the facility. The MYSI team will also assist DHHS with employee recruitment and retention, as well as assist in a process to assess the present staff’s strengths, weaknesses, abilities and motivation. Other MYSI initiatives would include, but not limited to:

Goals to be achieved

- **Leadership Retreat** with executive & facility leadership
- Establish an in-house **Champions Team** of representative staff members across all campuses for ongoing feedback and support around program fidelity and implementation
- Construct a **Developmental Stage System Matrix** – a revised Level System for youth programming that includes curricula, experiences, and developmental assignments with focus on individualized, internalized change
- Develop a defined but expandable core support team for youth, **Unit-based Management** with participants whose roles and responsibilities are clearly spelled out both in the care coordination process and by virtue of their DHHS or contracted position description.
- Develop a revised **Case Planning Process** that includes the assessment phase, program components and all current meeting/processes designed to make decisions regarding youth initial on campus placement, subsequent campus programming, progress, and recommendations for release.

- Develop a **Training Plan** to evaluate current training, coaching and supervision to support the proposed developmental model.

Performance Metrics *(based on designated facility metrics, generally including):*

- Reduction in escapes
- Reduction in violence
- Reduction in assaults (on staff and on youth)
- Reduction in critical incidences
- Educational accomplishments
- Reduction in use of restraints and confinement
- Reduction in suicide attempts and self-harm
- Reduction in recidivism
- Off campus activities
- Youth and family satisfaction

Facilities Transition Timeline

	July 2020	August 2020	September 2020	October 2020	November 2020
Execute contract with MYSI	X				
Security enhancements to HRC residential buildings	X	X	X		
Meetings with legislators & stakeholders	X				
Meetings with youth facility teammates	X				
Training of Whitehall and Hastings teammates	X	X			
MYSI onsite at YRTC campuses		X	X	X	X
Transfer SUD youth to Whitehall			X		
Move female youth from Kearney & Geneva to Hastings				X	
Close Geneva YRTC program				X	
MYSI begins leadership development					X