

STATE OF COLORADO

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John W. Hickenlooper
Governor

March 12, 2018

Ms. Nina Salomon
Council of State Governments Justice Center
444 North Capitol St., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Salomon:

On behalf of the entire state of Colorado, please accept this letter as our commitment to the Council of State Governments Justice Center (CSGJC) Statewide Juvenile Justice Improvement Initiative Technical Assistance Opportunity.

During our administration, we have made great progress to change the policy and culture of the Division of Youth Services (DYS), formerly Youth Corrections, in Colorado. In partnership with the General Assembly and stakeholders, we continue to implement programming that changes how we rehabilitate youth and improves public safety. We would like to outline some of the significant strides that DHS has made in a short period, in our efforts to enhance our overall culture. Here are just a few of the changes implemented:

- Working with the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University and the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute, we have conducted a full assessment of DHS services. This will have a strong focus on the effective delivery of evidence-based practices, the appropriate length of service for youth in our care, and ensuring that appropriate transition and aftercare services are in place upon release.
- DHS continues to move forward with the full implementation of the Sanctuary Model, a trauma responsive model geared towards a positive culture change for both youth and staff within DHS.
- Established a pilot program utilizing the consulting services of Missouri Youth Services Institute to further move our system towards a therapeutic environment.
- In July 2017, DHS retitled the position of "Correctional Youth Security Officer" to "Youth Service Specialist" and has already started marketing and recruiting for this newly identified role. This change alone has started to actualize a new type of candidate prepared to work with at-risk youth congruent with our culture change and new direction.
- Eliminated pressure-point pain compliance and offense strikes as of August 1, 2017. This is a significant milestone the Division put considerable effort behind accomplishing.
- Eliminated the use of the Safe Restraint Wrap device for all young people ages 10-13 across all DHS state-operated youth centers as of July 1, 2017.
- Further eliminated the Safe Restraint Wrap device for youth ages 14-20 across all DHS state-operated youth centers November 2018.
- Effective September 1, 2017, we implemented a forward-thinking youth search process that eliminated routine strip searches and instead implemented a procedure that preserves youth's dignity while also maintaining effective safety and security practices.
- DHS continues to be a leader in the nation in the limited use of seclusion. Seclusion use averages less than one hour per episode, which is well below the national average of 16 hours per episode.

- DYS continues to utilize a seamless care management system that ensures consistency in a youth's treatment from assessment through parole.

Nevertheless, we still have more to do. We continue to struggle with: 1) inconsistent adoption and implementation of research-based policies and practices; 2) challenges in how data is accessed and shared to match youth to appropriate services; 3) disjointed and uncoordinated efforts that do not further bolster partnerships between DYS, behavioral health providers, child welfare, and schools.

Together, we can continue to advance efficient and effective policies that improve outcomes and make our communities safer. We are incredibly excited for this opportunity to partner with CSGJC to improve the lives of our most precious resource here in Colorado: our youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John Hickenlooper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being particularly prominent.

John Hickenlooper
Governor