

# EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF VIRGINIA'S JUVENILE DETENTION CENTERS

## STUDY PLAN

### Study Mandate

- Recent efforts have transformed the Commonwealth's juvenile justice system by reducing the use of state-operated juvenile correctional centers, and as a result of such efforts, there has been a substantial decline in the number of children admitted to or detained in juvenile detention centers in the Commonwealth. Because it is anticipated that the number of children committed to juvenile detention centers will continue to decline, a study should be conducted to identify potential changes to the operation of local and regional juvenile detention centers to accommodate for the population decline. Therefore, the Virginia Commission on Youth shall:
  - Establish an advisory committee to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of our current detention center system, evaluating the intersection of public safety and the rehabilitation of youth.

### Identified Issues

- There are 24 juvenile detention centers (JDCs) in the Commonwealth, each operated by local governments or multi-jurisdictional commissions.
- Juvenile detention centers are funded by state and local dollars.
- Juvenile detention provides a temporary placement for juveniles with criminal charges who require a secure environment to ensure public safety for the community or to provide protection of the juvenile's own well-being.
- The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) partners with nine local detention centers to provide Community Placement Programs (CPPs). CPPs are highly structured and disciplined residential programs for committed juveniles.
- Pre-dispositional (Pre-D) juveniles constitute a majority of the population within a detention center (79.3%).
- Sixty-six percent of juveniles had a length of stay of 21 days or less.
- The number of juvenile intake cases has declined significantly since 2012, with a decrease of 65.5%. Overall, the JDC average daily population declined by 53.3% between 2012 (750 detainees) and 2021 (350 detainees). The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) forecasts that the JDC population will continue to decrease through 2022 and then level off at around 321 detainees for the remainder of their forecast through 2027.
- Current state regulations prioritizes state funding for new JDCs that are operated regionally, but no difference in funding exists for state support of existing detention centers.
- In their 2021 study on *Improving Virginia's Juvenile Justice System*, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission identified an estimated \$7 to \$14 million in state funds that could be saved through consolidating facilities.

- In addition to population decline other potential issues to consider in evaluating JDC's include, but are not limited to, each facility's age, remodeling needs, distance from youths' home communities, staff turnover rates, quality of treatment programming, and availability of treatment space.

### **Study Activities**

- Provide an overview of Virginia's Juvenile Detention Center system.
- Convene an Advisory Group with representatives from the following agencies and groups:
  - Commission on Youth members
  - Commonwealth's Attorneys
  - Court Service Units
  - Office of the Attorney General
  - Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia
  - Public Defenders
  - Secretary of Public Safety And Homeland Security
  - Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee Staff
  - Virginia Association of Counties (VACO)
  - Virginia Court Judge
  - Virginia Department of Education
  - Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
  - Virginia Department of Planning and Budget
  - Virginia House Appropriations Committee Staff
  - Virginia Juvenile Detention Association
  - Virginia Municipal League (VML)
  - Virginia Sheriffs' Association
  - Youth Advocates
- Conduct site visits and interviews at juvenile detention centers.
- Develop and conduct surveys for Virginia's local and regional detention centers.
- Map and analyze current juvenile detention centers.
- Research state and federal laws and regulations.
- Develop recommendations as needed.
- Present findings and recommendations to the Commission on Youth.
- Receive public comment.
- Prepare final report.