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ADMINISTRATOR'S MEMO TO COUNTIES

MEMO # 16-03

DATE: November 7, 2016

TO: County Departments of Human/Social Services Directors

FROM: John D. Paquin, Administrator 
Shelby A. B. McCulley, Assistant Administrator 

SUBJECT: Division of Juvenile Corrections Update

The Department of Corrections (DOC) is committed to the safety, security, and well-being of all youth at Copper Lake and Lincoln Hills Schools (CLS/LHS) and has implemented substantial reforms at these facilities. To continue open communication with our county partners we are sending this memo to provide additional detail regarding the ongoing efforts by the Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC) to ensure youth in our care are safe and receiving high-quality programming, as well as preliminary information regarding DOC's 2017-19 budget request and future planning.

LHS/CLS Update

DJC continues to prioritize and invest in safety, security, and quality services at CLS/LHS. Many recent improvement efforts have focused on staff performance in professional communication, de-escalation, and incident response. We've placed particular emphasis on training, documentation, and communication with counties and families. Incident reporting frequency and quality are closely monitored for compliance with updated policies, and incidents and injuries are promptly reviewed by CLS/LHS management and DJC administration to ensure appropriate and timely staff response. DJC is also in the process of automating incident reporting through the implementation of a new youth information system, which will facilitate improved reporting consistency and oversight.

While the safety of youth and staff remains our top operational objective, DJC also continues to prioritize treatment and educational programming. Youth continue to be assigned to programming through the Joint Planning and Review Committee (JPRC) process. This planning process involves input from the youth, their parents, county representatives, and CLS/LHS staff. Youth receive treatment specific to their areas of need, which may include substance use treatment, anger management training, or cognitive behavioral therapy. Facility staff also continue to engage in a variety of ongoing training activities, including techniques for working

with youth who have mental health needs and advanced supervisor training in evidence-based practices.

In addition to treatment, LHS/CLS continues to hold school year round. In the 2015-16 school year (July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016), 390 students earned more than 1,300 credits toward high school graduation. Over 90 percent of girls maintained or improved their reading and math scores, as did approximately 85 percent of boys. Twenty two students earned high school diplomas, and an additional 16 youth earned high school equivalency diplomas. Each graduation is celebrated in a special commencement ceremony with LHS/CLS staff, families, the youth's peers, and community partners in attendance to recognize the youth's tremendous accomplishment.

Other specific improvements include:

- Revised youth complaint processes that ensures youth confidentiality in submitting complaints;
- Hired a DJC Psychology Director and a CLS/LHS Psychological Services Manager, who will provide oversight of juvenile mental health services;
- Implemented a local Pre-Service Academy specifically designed for new Youth Counselors, which included 24 new Counselors who graduated from the first academy in October;
- Developed and proceeding with enhanced medication distribution standards to ensure skilled, accurate, and safe medication administration for all youth;
- Purchased and deployed additional body cameras that are worn by security staff to record interactions with youth and fixed cameras throughout the facility to provide additional video coverage in previously unrecorded areas; and
- Received State Building Commission approval to proceed with two high-priority capital improvement projects to replace the CLS/LHS primary electrical system and improve security equipment infrastructure.

We assure you that the youth placed in state juvenile correctional facilities are safe and receive appropriate care, treatment, and education. Safety issues previously identified have been addressed. We are continuously working to improve our operations, and we are committed to restoring confidence that LHS/CLS is a safe and effective placement for youth in need of significant interventions. Both agency and division leadership continue to visit CLS/LHS on a regular basis to reinforce the changes that have been made.

Community Supervision Update

While CLS/LHS has been a primary focus in recent months, we are also making significant advances in our field operations. In response to provisions in 2015 Wisconsin Act 55 and in efforts to increase our effectiveness in enabling DJC youth to live safely and productively in the community, DJC is working to carefully combine aftercare supervision and the Corrective Sanctions Program into a single evidence-based, risk- and need-focused community supervision program. DJC completed a thorough review of best practices in juvenile supervision, including

commissioning the 2015 Evidence-Based Youth Supervision Standards Project conducted by the National Council on Crime & Delinquency. Findings from this research were used to develop a pilot supervision program conducted by DJC regional chiefs, supervisors, field agents, youth counselors, and community coaches over the last year. DJC analysts are currently evaluating the data collected during the pilot, and plans are underway to scale up our new evidence-based community supervision program statewide in 2017. Key features of this new model include risk-based supervision intensity, need-focused skill practice, youth incentives for program progress, and evidence-based responses to violation of supervision rules. Counties can expect to hear more about these exciting changes in the coming months.

2017-19 Biennial Budget Request and Future Planning

In September, the Department of Corrections (DOC) submitted its proposed 2017-19 Biennial Budget Request to the Department of Administration for consideration. This request will be reviewed and a proposed biennial budget will be submitted by the Governor to the legislature for consideration and passage in early 2017. Due to the high level of interest in DJC's future plans and our desire to maintain transparency, we believe it is important to share with our county partners key components of DJC's budget request at this early stage.

CLS/LHS is primarily funded through program revenue, which means that operational funding is primarily dependent on revenue generated by a daily rate charged to counties and other purchasers of juvenile correctional services and is directly impacted by the number of youth placed at the facility. However, facility expenses do not fluctuate significantly based on the institution population, and certain fixed costs are required to maintain operations.

As a steward of public funds, DJC strives to utilize its revenue responsibly and efficiently, which includes recommending a daily rate that is responsive to the fluctuating juvenile facility population; youth security, treatment, health, and education needs; legislative requirements; and county budget constraints. Over the past 10 years, rates have ranged from \$203 in FY 2006 to \$301 in FY 2015. The FY 2017 rate is \$292.

Based on current trends, DJC anticipates an average daily population of 55 fewer youth in FY 2018 and FY 2019 than was budgeted in FY 2016 and FY 2017, resulting in lower revenue estimates. We remain committed to security, safety, and effective programming, which require the same or increased staffing levels. DOC has proposed a daily rate of \$326 in FY 2018 and \$331 in FY 2019 for placement at CLS/LHS to ensure adequate revenue to support operations in the next biennium.

DOC has also proposed specific initiatives to address areas of need, including:

- Increased staffing to move toward compliance with Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) requirements that will take effect in October 2017;
- Enhanced mental health services and staffing for Copper Lake School to meet the complex mental health needs of girls in our care; and

- Additional nursing staff to ensure safe and accurate medication administration across CLS/LHS.

The Department of Corrections is committed to CLS/LHS, and the DJC management team will continue to improve treatment and services for youth at these facilities by continuing to utilize effective practices. Along with the specific initiatives identified in DOC's budget request, we are moving forward with improving youth to staff ratios, enhancing staff training, integrating trauma informed care into DJC's culture and operations, and increasing medical and mental health services. As we do this work, we will continue to engage and seek input from counties, legislators, judges, law enforcement, and other stakeholders. We look forward to collaborating with you to continue creating better futures for the youth in our care, and we encourage you to forward this memo on to any county stakeholders, including those listed above, in order to further share our updates.

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