




Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Youth Services

Official Policy

<i>Policy Name:</i>	Policy Administration		
<i>Policy #:</i>	01.01.01(d)	<i>Effective Date:</i>	July 23, 2025
<i>Repeals:</i>	01.01.01(c)		
<i>References:</i>	Massachusetts General Court Legislative Research and Drafting Manual; United States Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Guide		
<i>Authority:</i>	MGL c. 18A, § 1		
<i>Signature:</i>	 Cecely Reardon, Commissioner		07/22/2025
<i>Applicability:</i>	This policy shall apply to DYS state employees.		

Policy

It is the policy of the Department of Youth Services (DYS) to establish and maintain a comprehensive approach to the development, review, and revision of policy to ensure effective implementation, dissemination, compliance, quality assurance and the implementation of evidence-based best practices. DYS Policy shall prescribe the rules and practices for the operation of DYS; assign responsibilities and required action; and dispense information needed to carry out the duties of DYS, its facilities, programs, services and operations.

Review and approval of all policy within DYS shall occur on a systematic basis. All policies shall be issued in the official format and approved in writing by the Commissioner in accordance with these procedures.

All bulletins, advisories, directives, orders, notices, rules, or regulations regarding operations of the central office, regional level, residential program, or community service operations shall be consistent with DYS policy and procedure. Definitions of particular terms shall be likewise consistent in all DYS policy documents, unless the reasons for unique use of modified definitions or terms are clearly set forth in the "Definitions" paragraph of a particular policy.

All new and revised policies shall be disseminated to all state employees, contracted provider employees, volunteers, and, when appropriate or required by policy, youth and families. Supervisors shall notify the employees who directly report to them of new or revised policies and document such notification. Location Managers shall provide access to the policy manual for all employees either through electronic or written means.

Procedures

A. Definitions

1. The following terms shall have the meanings assigned to them in this policy for purposes of interpreting this policy:

Evidence-based: Any procedure, protocol or practice, including but not limited to practices set forth in the United States Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Model Programs Guide, that is proven by objective criteria to reliably produce a desired outcome.

Executive Staff: Individuals within the Central Office with the titles of Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, and General Counsel.

Performance Measure: An identified outcome that gauges productivity or effectiveness and is established to ensure quality, accountability and compliance.

Policy: A definite course of action, direction or principle adopted or pursued by the agency that guides and determines present and future decisions, actions and activities toward the attainment of the stated objective. A policy leads to compliance with standards and the overall goals of the Agency.

Policy Counsel: Attorney within the DYS legal department designated by title, responsible for overseeing policy development for the Department.

Standard: A model, rule, guideline and/or criteria of a definite principle.

2. Terms that are defined in Policy #01.01.04, "Policy Definitions" shall have the meanings assigned to them in that policy, unless a contrary meaning is clearly intended.
3. Terms not defined in Policy #01.01.04 or in this policy shall have the meanings assigned to them by reasonably accepted standard dictionary definitions of American English.

B. Policy Steering Committee

1. The Policy Steering Committee (“PSC”), in conjunction with the Policy Counsel, shall review all proposed policies including the substance, expected performance measures, and resources necessary for development and implementation.
2. The PSC shall consist of representatives from Central Office, each Region, residential services, community services, union membership, program services, contracted providers and representatives in the topic area of the policy being reviewed. Additional members may be added to the PSC based on the policy being considered. Failure of any of the representatives to attend policy steering meetings shall not affect the ability of the PSC to meet and review policy. State or contracted provider or personnel, regardless of position held, are encouraged to attend scheduled PSC meetings, subject to a supervisor’s approval.
3. The purpose of the PSC shall be to collect and review qualitative and quantitative data related to proposed new or revised policies, to provide advice and assistance to the Executive Staff. Data reviewed by the PSC shall include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Stakeholder and subject matter expert feedback, including the expertise of PSC members;
 - b. Policies and practices from other agencies and jurisdictions, both within and outside of the Commonwealth; and
 - c. Any relevant quantitative data that may have been collected regarding DYS youth.
4. To fulfill its duties, the PSC may, through the Policy Counsel, conduct interviews with DYS or other agency staff or subject matter experts, and may request such data within the agency’s custody and control that is relevant to its inquiries, except where otherwise limited by law.
5. The role of the PSC is informal and advisory. Nothing in this policy limits the plenary authority of the Commissioner to make and promulgate Department policy pursuant to chapter 18A, §1 of the General Laws.
6. The role of the Policy Counsel shall be to facilitate PSC meetings, conduct interviews on behalf of the PSC, review data requested by the PSC, review all proposed policies to ensure they are consistent with existing laws and regulations, and author policy drafts for the PSC and Executive Staff to review.

C. Policy Formulation and Review Process

1. As prioritized by the Executive Staff, the Policy Counsel, in conjunction with the PSC, shall coordinate the development, review, approval, and dissemination of DYS policy and procedure.
2. Policies promulgated by DYS shall be evidence-based and consistent with national best practices where applicable.

3. All employees, agencies and contracted providers that work for or with DYS are encouraged to make suggestions for policy, including the purpose, goals, and expected outcomes.
4. Any suggestions for new or revised policy shall be submitted to the appropriate supervisor and then to the Policy Counsel in draft form with the reason for the proposal.
5. Every proposed or revised policy shall include:
 - a. A general description of the policy, including its purpose;
 - b. Any process or procedure required; and
 - c. Performance measures to determine outcomes and fidelity.
6. The Policy Counsel shall discuss any proposed new or revised policies with the Executive Staff to determine whether the proposal should advance to review by the PSC.
7. Upon a determination by the Executive Staff that the policy shall move forward, the Policy Counsel and PSC shall complete the following process:
 - a. Review the initial policy drafts;
 - b. Distribute drafts, as needed, to individuals whose area of responsibility is affected or who have expertise in specific areas of concern and other interested parties, which may include any employee of DYS or others from another public or private agency and conduct interviews as necessary;
 - c. Review any relevant data;
 - d. Consider feedback and comments that have been timely received; and
 - e. Depending on the policy topic, send a draft for Commissioner/designee review for input during this process.
8. Upon completion of the PSC's review, the Policy Counsel shall conduct a legal review. Once legal review is complete, the policy shall be submitted to the General Counsel for approval and then to the Executive Staff for review, along with a distribution and training plan.
9. Upon approval by Executive Staff, the policy shall be signed by the Commissioner.
10. Revised policies shall supersede all previous DYS policy statements, bulletins, directives, orders, notices, advisories, or rules regarding operations that are inconsistent with newly promulgated policy.
11. All policies shall follow the approved format as directed by the Policy Counsel and conform in style to the guidelines of the Massachusetts General Court Legislative Research and Drafting Manual.
12. All policies shall comply with all Federal and State laws, regulations including those for licensing, and other applicable requirements.

D. Numbering System

1. The Policy Counsel is responsible for establishing and monitoring the numbering system.
2. A three-part numbering system shall be used to identify policies as follows:
 - a. Part one: Indicates four content areas including General Admin; Continuum of Care; Daily Living; or Community.
 - b. Part two: Indicates which section within the content area.
 - i. General Administration, which may include: Fiscal Management; Legal; Human Resources; Technology; and Volunteer.
 - ii. Continuum of Care, which may include: Admission/Intake; Clinical; Education; Health Services; and Casework Services.
 - iii. Daily Living, which may include: Facilities; Security; General living; and Personal Property.
 - iv. Community Operations, which may include: Reintegration and Discharge.

- c. Part three: Indicates the subsection of the specific section.

E. Approval and Effective Date

1. The Commissioner is the approving authority for all policies.
2. A policy is effective upon signature of the Commissioner and at midnight on the effective date specified in the policy itself. No policy shall be effective before being signed by the Commissioner, regardless of the effective date specified in the policy.
3. Upon the effective date, the policy supersedes any conflicting provisions or directives that were issued at an earlier time.

F. Distribution and Documentation of Policy

1. Upon approval and effective date, new or revised policies shall be posted on the DYS public website and the internal-facing DYS electronic system.
2. The Policy Counsel, in consultation with the PSC, shall notify all state employees, contracted providers pursuant to contract requirements, and other interested parties of new and revised policies.
3. Location Managers, or their designees, upon notification of a new or revised policy shall distribute and review all new or revised policies with their employees, including volunteers at their location prior to the effective date of the policy unless specific training by the Training Academy is required as determined by Executive Staff.

4. For new employees, Location Managers or their designees shall review all current policies directly relevant to the new employee's job duties during their Basic Training On the Job Training week and sign the On the Job Training Checklist documenting that each new employee was provided the information and confirmed that they understand the information.
5. Location Managers or their designees shall document their distribution and review of a new or revised policy with an individual sign-off or through a staff meeting roster and keep such records within the appropriate location file and as otherwise required by the individual policy.

G. Review Process

1. Policies shall be reviewed every three years from the date of enactment by the Policy Counsel.
2. As part of the review process, the Policy Counsel shall review relevant policy for consistency with current DYS practice, other DYS policy, and compliance with other standards or model practices. The review shall include:
 - a. A language audit to determine that policy terms and definitions are consistent and current;
 - b. Policy goals;
 - c. Performance measures; and
 - d. An evidence-based assessment of results to determine if policies are achieving the desired outcomes.
3. Upon completing the review process, the Policy Counsel shall certify to the Executive Staff that policy is consistent with current law and definitions.
4. If any policy needs revision, the Policy Counsel shall submit the policy to the PSC in accordance with Section C.
5. The Policy Counsel shall also conduct a legal review of policies to determine whether there have been any changes in statute, regulation, case law or other sources of law that require amendments to the policy.
6. Upon completing the legal review, the Policy Counsel shall certify to the Executive Staff that the policy is either consistent with current applicable statutes, regulations and caselaw, or must be submitted through the policy review process for revision or amendment in accordance with Section C.

H. Availability of Policies, Policy Manuals and Official Records

1. The Legal Unit shall maintain the official record for DYS Policy and Procedures in printed and electronic format.

2. Such record shall be maintained in electronic format through the public facing DYS website and internal electronic systems for DYS employees.
3. Policies shall be available to all employees on the computer network at their work locations where such access is possible.
4. Any work location that does not have access to the electronic version of the DYS Policies and Procedures shall have a printed format available to all employees.
5. Policy and Procedures may be made available to youth in each location unless the Location Manager documents a specific, articulable safety or security concern, or as required in the specific policy.

I. Applicability

1. All policies and procedures shall designate the applicability of the policy.
2. Unless otherwise stated in the individual policy, DYS Policies and Procedures apply to all state employees, contracted providers, and volunteers/interns.

J. Performance Measures:

1. Employees shall refer to the performance measures established for this policy and maintained by the Policy Counsel to determine if they are meeting the expectations of the policy.