

Department of Youth Services

Fiscal Year 2024 Fact Sheet



Mission

The Department of Youth Services (DYS) fosters positive outcomes for youth, builds safer communities, and collaborates for an equitable and fair justice system.

Vision

We envision a Commonwealth in which every young person has the skills, supports, and resources necessary to engage safely with their communities and lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Values

Fairness: We value fairness in our treatment of youth in our care, their families and community supports, and our staff and partners. We support increased fairness across all aspects of our justice system through strong and transparent relationships with our partners and collaborators.

Transparency: We believe that the processes by which we make our consequential decisions matter, and we are open and forthcoming about what information is informing our decisions and who is the final authority.

Racial Equity: We believe that racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if our racial identities no longer predicted how we fare in life. Achieving this state requires absolute elimination of all policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that lead to differential outcomes by race. We strive to ensure that the impacts of our work reduce and mitigate racial and other disparities within DHS, our communities, the justice system, and beyond.

Integrity: We value honesty, fair processes, and full accountability for our actions.

Youth Served by DHS

DYS serves five primary categories of juvenile justice-involved young people between the ages of 12 and 22: Diversion, Overnight Arrest, Detained Youth, Committed Youth, and Youth Engaged in Services.

1. **Diversion Youth:** DHS oversees the Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP). This state-level initiative offers high-quality, evidence-based programming that can serve as an alternative to arresting youth or prosecuting them through the juvenile court. A primary goal of the initiative is to promote equitable access to diversion

across the state as a strategy for addressing racial and ethnic disparities within the juvenile justice system.

2. **Overnight Arrest Youth:** DYS operates a network of juvenile overnight arrest (ONA) placements as a resource to local police departments and municipalities. ONA provides a safe placement for youth arrested when courts are closed, who are either ineligible for or unable to post bail.
3. **Detained Youth:** Detained youth, comprised of youth detained for delinquency and youthful offender offenses, are committed to the care of DYS by the juvenile court during the pendency of their juvenile court cases.
4. **Committed Youth:** Youth may be committed to the Department's custody after being adjudicated delinquent or as a youthful offender. Most youth who are adjudicated delinquent are committed to the custody of DYS until the age of 18. Youth adjudicated as a youthful offender may be committed to age 21.
5. **Youth Engaged in Services:** DYS offers voluntary, post-discharge services to all committed youth until age 22. This initiative, known as Youth Engaged in Services (YES), provides transitional supports and services to youth when they are at the highest risk of recidivism. Through YES, youth work with their caseworker and enter into a voluntary agreement for transitional services to meet agreed-upon goals.

DYS Caseload in fiscal year 2024

- 343 referrals to diversion
- 647 admissions to overnight arrest programs
- 897 admissions to detention programs
 - 82.9% were male and 17.1% were female
 - 17.1% of youth self-identified as White; 30.4% as Black; 46.0% as Hispanic; 0.7% as Asian; and 4.7% as other races
 - 15.8 years was the average age at detention admission
- 189 of youth were committed for the first-time
 - Of the 189, 88.4% were male and 11.6% female
 - 11.6% of youth self-identified as White; 29.1% as Black; 50.8% as Hispanic; 1.1% as Asian; and 7.4% as other races
 - 16.5 years was the average age at commitment
- In total, 419 committed youth were served by DYS
- 71.3% of all youth discharged from DYS opted to engage in a voluntary YES agreement

Programs Administered

DYS divides its operations across five geographic regions, allowing DYS to provide a continuum of services and supervision for youth in close geographic proximity to their home community and families. This continuum consists of residential and community programs administered by state and contracted providers.

Residential:

- Two (2) State Overnight Arrest Locations: These programs, located in Worcester and Suffolk counties, provide overnight accommodations for youth arrested during evening hours and weekends pending their initial court appearance. In addition, overnight arrest beds have been set aside in 6 provider-operated staff secure programs located throughout the state.
- Two (2) Reception Centers: These centralized community programs, located in Worcester and Springfield allow DYS staff to supervise and monitor youth who are detained and placed in community-based options (foster homes) during the pendency of their court case.
- 34 Hardware and Staff Secure Residential Programs: These programs for detention, assessment, treatment, and revocation offer a range of security levels into which youth are placed depending on their risk level and status.
 - There are separate programs for females and males (youth who identify as transgender are placed based on their preference on a case-by-case basis, depending on self-identification and safety measures).
 - All programs provide education, recreational, clinical, medical, and behavioral health services.
 - Young people who are committed to DYS undergo a comprehensive assessment and receive individualized treatment that may include mental health and substance use programming.
- Two (2) Transitions to Independent Living Programs: These programs provide residential and extensive community resource development services to older, committed adolescents whose aftercare plan is designed around independent living or who need more intensive community transition services as they prepare to return to their community.

Community:

- 19 District Offices and Two (2) Satellite Offices: These programs provide supervision and support to committed youth transitioning back to the community from a DYS residential program. Caseworkers in these programs connect transitioning youth with education and vocational services, job readiness training, behavioral health, medical services, and pro-social opportunities.
- Five (5) Independent Living Programs: These programs ensure necessary life skill development, provide safe housing supports, and offer access to needed community-based services in coordination with the DYS casework team in preparation for the transition to independence and readiness for adulthood.

DYS Highlights and Progress

- **Educational Services:** DYS contracts with Commonwealth Corporation and the Collaborative for Educational Services to provide instruction and educational services to youth for 5.5 hours daily, Monday through Friday. Below are the school year 2023-24 performance data for DYS committed youth enrolled in general education:
 - In the Spring, DYS administered 414 MCAS exams. Over 55% of youth who had failed the 10th-grade MCAS prior to commitment passed in math, and 80% passed in ELA.
 - As of August 22, 2024, 192 youth successfully earned their high school diploma or HiSET (high school equivalency credential).
 - 123 students enrolled in postsecondary courses. 109 students in residence dually enrolled in both high school/HiSET classes and college classes.
 - Youth obtained 185 industry-recognized certificates, gaining valuable knowledge and career readiness skills through in-class instruction and online learning platforms.

- **Career, Vocational, and Employment Services**
 DYS offers its Skill Up Career, Technical, and Workforce Training and Employment Services Program (Skill Up) for youth up to 22 years of age. Skill Up currently has 24 statewide providers who oversee 36 Skill Up programs statewide. The Skill Up programs provide workforce training to the youth served statewide in both residential and community settings. In FY2024:
 - 12 vocational spaces were developed or enhanced within residential facilities including carpentry workshops, barbershops, and music studios.
 - Employer Outreach Services brought on 49 new employer/training partners, totaling 145 partnerships.
 - 87 youth gained market employment with the assistance of career navigators.
 - 91 youth received training in employment programs such as culinary, carpentry, bike repair, barbershop immersion, silk screen, horticulture, and maintenance.

- **DYS Arts Initiative**
 - In FY24, the new DYS Arts Initiative Request for Response was released
 - 8 Music studios with professional-level equipment were designed and installed in programs across the state through the help of a hip-hop education consultant and music industry arts partner.
 - 13 arts partners provided residencies and mentorships to support youth's artistic pursuits during transitions. Programming included music, film, fashion, entrepreneurship, drumming, visual arts, poetry, Shakespeare, and hip-hop education.

- **DYS Workforce:** DYS's current workforce numbers are as follows:
 - 808 Full-time state employees (FTE)
 - Of the 808 FTEs, 70% identify as male, 28% identify as female, and 2% are unreported

- 42% identify as White, 42% as Black, 13% as Hispanic, 2% as Asian, 1% as American Indian/Alaskan Native
 - 4% self-identified as veterans
 - The average age of the DYS employee is 44
- 77% of the DYS workforce is comprised of direct care staff (including those in the residential programs and the District Offices).
- **FY2024 Budget:** DYS FY24 budget was \$183.1
 - \$116.9M: Residential services for committed population
 - \$29.9M: Services for detained residential population
 - \$25.6M: Services for committed non-residential population
 - \$4.9M: Administrative and operations account
 - \$3.1M: Teacher salaries
 - \$2.6M: Overnight Arrest