

Douglas County Youth Center

Douglas County Youth Center (DCYC)

Mission Statement

“To protect the interest and safety of the community by providing a secure, safe and structured environment for youth and to offer the necessary educational and developmental resources to a culturally diverse population of young people in detention, staff secure and in the community.”

DCYC is a twenty-four hour, seven day a week 144 bed facility which house males and females ages 10-18. Based on the current new law, The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) the bed availability total is 96 beds. PREA requires a 1 to 8 staff to youth ratio.

Youth at DCYC are provided with education, medical/mental health services, dental, career/jobs assistance along with access to community service providers.

HOME Program -

The Youth Center provides a community-based program referred to as the HOME Program (Home On Monitoring Equipment). This program provides supervision and accountability for youth through electronic and GPS equipment. This program also allows young people to live at home, to work and to continue to attend their home school. Not only is this fiscally responsible, it is also the right thing to do for those youth who meet the classification for this program.

The HOME program also serves as a diversion program for youth who are truant from school. The Youth Center piloted a truancy program with Omaha South High School. This program has now been extended to all of Omaha Public Schools. There is a direct correlation between truancy and delinquency and we believe that our efforts to keep youth in school will pay off by reducing future admissions into THE YOUTH CENTER.

The HOME Program has expanded and now allows for youth to be placed on the HOME Program at the point of intake. This provides youth the ability to go to their residence instead of being detained during the adjudication process.

The Douglas County Juvenile Assessment Center now uses the HOME Program as a graduated sanction for Diversion; this allows youth the ability to complete Diversion, avoiding adjudication.

Education -

Douglas County Youth Center has 9 fulltime teachers who direct and assist students to recovery credits or maintain staying on track for graduation. Students are required to have 3.5 hours of classroom instruction per day; Youth Center students receive 4 to 5 hours of instruction each day. Students also earn credits in all Core Classes, Physical Education, Electives and Science. DCYC gave away in 2017, over 500 books to students at the Youth Center to encourage reading. These books were donated by Terry McMullen, AIT and the Junior League of Omaha.

The Youth Center provides a School Liaison to assist students while at the Youth Center and to smooth the transition when returning to their home school. This person is responsible for

compiling information from student transcripts; this information is used to develop an Academic Advancement Plan (AAP). The AAP serves as a guide for the students to graduate. Credits may be earned in all core High School classes and many electives. The Liaison also prepares a Student Detainee Status Report as a court document to provide information on student achievement, family visitations and the young person's overall behavior while at the Youth Center.

The Youth Center sends documentation of completed school work to the student's home school. The homeschool accepts and awards those credits earned by the students at the Youth Center.

Acellus and Edmentum are web-based learning systems. These programs allow students to complete classes online. Title I provides the funding necessary to provide this opportunity to ensure that our young people receive their high school diploma.

Parent/Teacher Conferences at the Youth Center occur every 4 months for those students who stay at the Youth Center for 30 days or more. The Youth Center is one of only a few detention facilities in the country to offer Parent Teacher Conferences. The hope is that this will encourage families to stay engaged with their child's academic success that will continue as they return to their home school.

The Youth Center has a Career Center which provides students with the opportunity to be exposed to guest speakers from community agencies and potential employers. Students may sign up for summer employment through Heartland Workforce Solutions while at The Youth Center. Students receive application assistance, career surveys and direct contact with potential employers at either of the 2 Career Fairs conducted at the Youth Center. This program serves as a platform to help young people see a future for themselves that they may not have otherwise considered.

The Family Engagement Liaison sends out an introductory letter to provide information about the Youth Center, along with a questionnaire to determine if there are barriers to visiting. This occurs within three days of admission into the Youth Center.

An Expediter Specialist is on staff at the Youth Center to assist and direct students as they prepare to leave the Youth Center. The goal is to shorten the amount of time needed for a student to return to their home school as seamless as possible. The Expediter contacts the receiving school for placement for students leaving DCYC after being detained more than 30 days.

Title I provide a Special Education Teacher for 20 hours a week. This person works with our students that have Individual Education Plans (IEP). DCYC has also hired a part-time Special Education teacher to tutor IEP students on the weekends and evenings.

Title I also provides direct services for the Portable Assistant Study Sequence (PASS) curriculum. In 2015 the PASS program collected data from all sites throughout the country who utilize PASS. We were honored to learn that our students earn credits at the highest rate of any site in the United States. The Youth Center was recognized nationally for the work that we do to assist student's to earn credits.

<https://drive.google.com/a/douglascounty-ne.gov/file/d/0BxjARsWVKcwhMjBxLUJWdGtPeHc/view?ts=565df619>

Many of our youth earn the credits necessary to graduate while at the Youth Center. The goal is for the student to return to their home school and participate in the graduation ceremony with their class. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. Regardless, it is important to acknowledge and celebrate this accomplishment. The Youth Center held 12 graduation ceremonies in 2017. The Youth Center provides a cap and gown ceremony for our graduates. The student's family is encouraged to attend along with faculty from their home school. The Youth Center provides cake and refreshments in honor of this event. The family will then receive a photo album to commemorate this event.

Poetry is offered twice a week at DCYC. Students like to express themselves and poetry is the right avenue to encourage youth to understand how to share their feelings. Volunteers conduct the Introduction to Poetry and it is well received by nearly all of the students.

Metropolitan Community College (MCC) – has proven to be an excellent partner. MCC provides opportunities for young people that have graduated from high school to begin taking college courses. MCC waives tuition and other expenses for the student. This is a tremendous opportunity for young people who look to continue their education to achieve professional goals that may require an Associates Degree, Bachelor's Degree and a variety of trade certifications. Students may also prepare for the ACT or SAT testing.

A variety of authors have spent time at the Youth Center. Authors Dr. Tommy Watson, Arthur Lyle, in 2018. Umar Johnson, Kam Kambon and Byron Garrett spoke to students at the Youth Center in 2016; two Authors, Principal Kafele and Andre Norman spoke to our students in 2015 and three authors in 2014.

Earning a GED is another option for students at the Douglas County Youth Center.

Barnes and Noble have proven to be a valuable partner as we look to improve reading levels. Twice a year Barnes and Noble offer a book fair to benefit the Youth Center. Barnes and Noble donate fifteen percent of purchases made that day by customers at the store and online to the Youth Center. The Youth Center receives thousands of new books and E-readers every year through this program.

Medical

The Youth Center Medical Department is staffed with a Nurse Manager and 4 RNs. All youth receive a physical within 24 hours of arriving at the Youth Center. The Youth Center contracts with the University Medical Center (UNMC) to provide a pediatrician and nurse practitioners, resulting in a pediatric clinic available for our youth.

Mental Health

Region 6 provides funding for two full time and one part-time Licensed Mental Health Practitioner's (LMHP's) along with a Psychologist. This results in critical services for our youth dealing with mental health issues.

Multi-Disciplinary Treatment Team (MDT)

The MDT Team brings members of different departments together weekly. These departments include - education, medical, mental health, detention and transition from DCYC. The Public Defender's Office, Department of Health and Human Services along with Probation participates

in the MDT meetings. This is a tremendous opportunity to share information regarding individual youth to ensure that we are providing the best care possible and that a plan is in place moving forward.

Programs

Release Ministries provides a fulltime Chaplin at DCYC, which includes Bible Study, special events services, non-denominational services along with a monthly Prayer Walk. Release Ministries has volunteers who address religious needs weekly, for all who would like to participate.

Adopt a Unit is a community outreach program designed to encourage community agencies to adopt a unit on a monthly basis. The goal is to encourage students to attend class, earn credits and/or maintain proper behavior in class. Sponsors may purchase pizza and soda for those successful units. The sponsors join our youth for lunch, which is a great opportunity to meet, encourage and educate our youth. This has allowed agencies and church groups to share information about the services they provide while encouraging the youth to earn credits for graduation.

Dusk to Dawn is a video that shows the family effect of gun violence through the lens of the medical team in the hospital emergency room. With UNMC and YouTurn staff, youth are shown a 12-minute video, which shows the efforts to save a life; giving the youth an opportunity to see and understand what families go thru when a family member is shot.

YouTurn is a community partner that provides Gang Prevention programming at DCYC. The program is an eight-week session that meets weekly to engage students regarding choices which may have a long-term effect on their life.

Yoga is provided twice a week for students, to allow them the opportunity to develop and use tools which could help them with relaxation techniques. While also developing how to deal with personal conflict and giving them the ability to recognize solutions.

Girls Scouts Girl Topia is a weekly scheduled activity, providing girls with skills to have their own business.

Do juSTice is a partnership between UNMC and Creighton University to help youth understand sexually transmitted diseases, appropriate relationships and the role of parenthood. Detainees have responded positively to the med students that provide this program.

Paul Bryant (author), Purposeful Living Leader meets twice a week with youth to provide hope and encouragement. Training occurs on the unit by ex-Husker Courtney Grixby. Youth are encouraged to believe they have something to contribute to society and understand the value of being a good citizen.

Domestic Violence –

Intimate Partner Educational Services are available for females at the Youth Center. This program provides information regarding domestic violence. Young people will know where they can go and who to contact if a need for services exists. Many of our young girls do not know what a healthy relationship looks like or how they should expect to be treated in a relationship.

This program provides this understanding for them. Domestic Violence education for females occurs weekly.

Community Outreach

Kent Bellows Studio artist met with Youth Center students to collaborate on art that would express the feelings of the youth at the Youth Center. The plan was to design and paint artwork for the exterior of the Youth Center based on this collaboration. The art students returned to the art studio and created 12' x10' canvass painting, which were ultimately installed on the exterior of the Youth Center.