



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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DJJ LAUNCHES NEW “REENTRY SERVICES UNIT” JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM - FOCUS ON REDUCING RECIDIVISM

(ATLANTA - GA) Commissioner Avery D. Niles is pleased to announce the Department of Juvenile Justice is rolling out a new Reentry Services Unit as he continues to restructure the agency to better meet requirements of Georgia’s new Juvenile Justice Reform Law. Commissioner Niles said he is adding the new 5-member Reentry Services Unit to help increase success rates for former juvenile offenders who are in the process of transitioning back to their communities after release from their court ordered detention and commitments at DJJ.

“We’re adapting standing policies and procedures to put this critical element of Georgia’s new Juvenile Justice Reform Law to work,” said Commissioner Niles. The Commissioner assembled the agency’s new Reentry Services Unit with a deputy and assistant director, a program development consultant, an education consultant and a reentry consultant. The five-member reentry services team works under supervision of Superintendent, Dr. Audrey R. Armistad.

“Governor Deal has signed Senate Bill 365 into law to help rehabilitated offenders make a successful reentry into society,” said DJJ’s Dr. Audrey R. Armistad. “Now the juvenile justice system should begin to experience increased numbers of former young offenders returning to the workforce and ready to support themselves.”

DJJ’s Associate School Superintendent says the new Reentry Services Unit will help Georgia’s juvenile offenders find a proper balance between opportunity and accountability. “SB 365 will help us get non-violent, first-time offenders get back on their feet and back on the right road to becoming law abiding, working citizens,” said School Superintendent Armistad.

“We need the kind of strong leadership qualities these professionals bring to DJJ to make our innovative strategies for the new Reentry Services Unit succeed,” said Commissioner Niles. “That’s why I brought this team of reentry service specialists together under the supervision of Dr. Armistad and Deputy Director Keith Jones.”

B. Keith Jones is DJJ’s new **Deputy Director** of Education Operations and Reentry Services. Jones’ experience in state government spans more than twenty years. He is a graduate of Valdosta State College, working on a Masters in Public Safety Administration from Columbus State University Command College.

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Mr. Jones was Counseling Services Manager for Reentry Services at the Georgia Department of Corrections and in charge of counseling services. In his new role with DJJ, Deputy Director Jones will supervise the Office of Reentry Services and support education operations.

Jones' Reentry Services Team assignment is to standardize operations of a comprehensive reentry program capable of overcoming obstacles that make it difficult for youth to find and retain viable employment while under community supervision. To accomplish that goal, the new Reentry Services Unit will work with clinical researchers to ensure Georgia's youth re-entry programs are data-driven and backed by research evidence that supports their effectiveness for reducing recidivism.

The unit must also develop strong support components through volunteer programs, faith-based connections and civic groups. DJJ is already forging strong partnerships with university system training programs and Georgia technical colleges to help former juvenile offenders train for jobs and find full time employment when they're released.

Cathy Smith-Curry is **Assistant Director** of DJJ's Office of Reentry Services. Assistant Director Smith-Curry has also worked with the Georgia Department of Corrections, where her last assignment was manager of the Leadership Development Unit. For the past fifteen years at DOC, Ms. Smith-Curry was responsible for all leadership training programs and initiatives for Employee Education Initiative, Advanced Management Training, Corrections Leadership Institute, Pre-Command College, Sergeants' Academy and E-learning.

Kim Conkle is the new **Program Development Consultant** for the Office of Reentry Services. Her experience in state law enforcement spans more than thirty years, beginning as a Narcotics Agent for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Kim also worked with the Clark County Juvenile Court and later with the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice as a JPPSII. PDC Conkle has extensive experience with DJJ's Community Services Division, including JPPS, JPM, Assistant District Director and Case Expeditor.

Andre' Cheek is **Education Consultant** for Reentry to the Office of Education. An educator with twenty-two years of experience, Andre' Cheek has worked with a variety of school systems and colleges including DeKalb County, Gainesville City Schools, Atlanta Public Schools, North Georgia College & State University, and Gainesville State College. Joining the DJJ Team in March 2013, Ms. Cheek serves as Research Analyst for the Office of Reentry Services and Education Division.

A.J. Sabree is **Reentry Consultant** for the DJJ Office of Reentry Services. With thirty-eight years of criminal justice experience, Mr. Sabree has served as the Director of Reentry Services with the Georgia Department of Corrections for the last nine years. He provided leadership to the Risk Reduction Unit and Offender Reentry Unit and was Director of Chaplaincy for many more. A.J. Sabree received his Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Cincinnati and has P.O.S.T. and other law enforcement certifications.

"Using the momentum of Georgia's new juvenile justice reform law, we have assembled these professionals to help us move this agency toward the development of a new state-of-the-art reentry model for DJJ," said Commissioner Niles. Niles says DJJ's reentry model should ideally be capable of monitoring progress and development of youth in the program and able to track improvement indicators or warning signs of recidivist behavior.

"Georgia's Juvenile Justice Reform is about using data-driven strategies and evidence-based innovative approaches. The toolbox for our new DJJ Reentry Services Unit will include mentoring, and vocational, educational and rehabilitative programs to help change the lives of our young offenders by reducing their high recidivism rates," said Commissioner Niles.

The Commissioner envisions a DJJ reentry model that includes individual plans for each youth in custody, and summarizing what programming should be provided during their term of secure custody to ensure their eventual return to the community is accomplished safely and successfully.

"We must concentrate on teaching these youth fundamental skillsets and providing them with opportunities to work at becoming productive young citizens. At DJJ we intend to construct a juvenile justice reentry model for Georgia that will increase the success rates of the youth who transition from our secure facilities," the Commissioner said.

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