



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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DJJ to START-UP SEVEN JUVENILE CAREER GUIDANCE CENTERS Young Offenders Will Learn Job Skills for Success After Release

(ATLANTA - GA) Commissioner Avery D. Niles is pleased to announce the Department of Juvenile Justice is set to introduce an innovative plan to open seven youth career guidance centers at its long-term Youth Development Campuses (YDC's) throughout Georgia. The purpose for these "Youth Career Centers" is to provide DJJ youth in detention with the necessary training, guidance and materials to assist them with career decision-making for successful transitions into the job market upon their release from the juvenile justice system.

The new career guidance program is being developed for use in Youth Development Campuses in Americus, Atlanta, Augusta, Eastman, Macon, Midland and Milan, Georgia. The Career Centers will be imbedded in existing educational areas and libraries at the YDC's. The centers will be staffed by trained career guidance technicians. This new career guidance concept will be implemented by DJJ's new Reentry Services Unit.

"We have empowered our Reentry Services Unit to do what it takes to help our youth make successful transitions back to their communities once their court-ordered commitments have been served," said DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles. "This is just one of our strategic approaches working with Governor Deal to reduce high rates of recidivism among juvenile offenders in Georgia," said Niles.

"We're opening these Youth Career Centers in DJJ's seven long-term secure facilities where they can help accomplish the most to provide our local communities with educated and skilled employees who will work hard to increase their chances of long-term career success," the Commissioner said.

Commissioner Niles points to recent research studies which show statistically significant reductions in recidivism for former youth offenders who are employed after receiving career education training in their communities. The Youth Career Centers planned by DJJ are expected to enhance Georgia's reintegration process by providing a place for DJJ youth to learn about and explore career options with the help of trained career technicians.

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"Step one for each of these Youth Career Centers will be to help enable our young offenders to raise a positive self-awareness through the development of a job skill," said Commissioner Niles, "And then this program becomes a stair-step process."

"Once Georgia's troubled youth develop needed job skills, our career counselors can teach them about career development and job retention and that's another step. Then as their career skills advance and their court-ordered incarcerations come to an end, we can help transition those youth back into their communities as more marketable individuals," said Commissioner Niles. "Step by step, these youth will realize they have more control over their own futures and they can help increase their own chances of longer-term career success," the Commissioner said.

The Career Center project is too big and too challenging for the Department of Juvenile Justice to launch without help from partners. These career development steps will be made possible through collaborations between the DJJ Reentry Services Unit and the Georgia Department of Labor, the Technical Colleges of Georgia, and local Community Based Organizations. Together these partners can concentrate on teaching DJJ youth the fundamental skillsets and providing them with opportunities to work at becoming productive young citizens.

The professional toolbox for DJJ's Reentry Services Unit will include an occupational assessment tool used by the Department of Labor. Youth occupation interests will be assessed using the DOL tool and then the youth will be trained using resume building software. Youth in the program will be engaged in career exploration activities with career guidance technicians.

Prior to release from custody, DJJ youth will be required to develop their own career plans, make personal contact with Department of Labor representatives, and to attend meetings with DOL Career Center reps. The DOL representatives will be responsible for assisting the youth once they transition into their home communities.

"This Youth Career Center plan will help us get non-violent, first-time offenders back on their feet and back on the right road to becoming law abiding, contributing citizens," said Commissioner Niles. "The new Career Centers will help change the lives of our young offenders by reducing their high recidivism rates," the Commissioner said.

"In order for Georgia's reentry program to be viable, programs like our new Youth Career Centers must provide the education and opportunities to learn the skills needed for the workforce of the future," Commissioner Niles said. "With Governor Deal's support, we will offer hope to our youth in detention, while protecting Georgia's citizens for the long term."

For more information, visit the Department of Juvenile Justice Reentry Services Unit on the web at <http://www.djjnewsandviews.org/juvenilejusticereform/reentryservices.html> to learn about vocational, educational, rehabilitative and mentoring programs at DJJ.

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