

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

**DATE:** November 23, 2018

**TO:** Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Mary Jo Meyers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services  
*Prepared by: Mark Mertens, Division of Youth & Family Services Administrator*

**SUBJECT: An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update to Wisconsin Act 185**

**Background**

Over the past few years, the County Executive and Milwaukee County Board have been working with key stakeholders to address the crisis at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake and have embraced policies surrounding the creation of a local alternative option for Milwaukee County youth to be placed in a safe environment, closer to home.

In March 2018, the Wisconsin State Legislature adopted Act 185 paving the way for the development of local alternatives to Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake. Act 185 directs the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake for use as youth correctional facilities by January 1, 2021 and authorizes County-operated **Secured Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth** (SRCCCYs). Under Act 185, DOC maintains supervision over juveniles with adult court sentences and youth in the Serious Juvenile Offender Program (SJOP), but the supervision of youth under other correctional placements is now transferred to the counties.

Under the Act, the State Building Commission can authorize up to a total of \$40 million to counties for the planning and construction of these facilities. Eligible construction costs include new construction as well as the renovation of an existing structure. To qualify for the funds, counties must submit grant applications to the Juvenile Corrections Grant Committee in DOC by March 31, 2019.

In November, the Milwaukee County Board adopted File No. 18-633 authorizing the creation of a capital project for the SRCCCY. This capital project enables DHHS to move forward on the planning and design for a local facility so that Milwaukee County youth can be closer to their families. This work will inform the county's grant application.

**Discussion**

Since the passage of Act 185, DHHS has been working on several fronts to implement a local SRCCCY. DHHS' Vision for the Milwaukee County Secure Residential Care Center for Children and Youth is to:

*Establish a safe, positive, sustainable, and developmentally appropriate treatment environment for youth committed to the county under Wisconsin Statute Section 938.34(4m) that effectively promotes accountability, protects the community, reduces recidivism, and returns youth to our community with the skills needed to become successful and productive citizens.*

With the near-term objective to develop plans for our SRCCCY and submit a grant application to the State next March, DYFS has assembled a Steering Committee and workgroups to address the following critical components of this project: Stakeholder Engagement, Programming and Location. The committee and work groups reflect a stakeholder network of 40 to 50 people who bring subject matter expertise in human services, criminal justice, law enforcement, education, therapeutic treatment, community advocacy, health and wellness, judiciary practice, systems reform, data analysis, facility design, government and finance.

### ***Stakeholder Engagement***

DHHS has developed a plan to ensure stakeholders are informed throughout the development of this project. Key stakeholders have been identified along with a strategy for initiating contact. DHHS has involved groups such as Youth Justice Milwaukee, the DYFS Aftercare Program and the Office of African-American Affairs for their recommendations for seeking input from various stakeholder groups. In addition, youth at Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake Schools and Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center have provided input through surveys. Professionals who serve youth in the courts have offered their perspective as well.

Objectives for these discussions include: providing background and education on the issues, dispelling myths, obtaining early reaction and feedback as well as cultivating internal and external allies to advocate for this project.

### ***Programming***

In October, a team of DYFS staff traveled to New Beginnings Youth Development Center in Laurel, MD. New Beginnings is a secure residential treatment facility for youth and is considered a model program in the area of youth justice. New Beginnings provides services such as mental, behavioral, substance abuse treatment and physical health care, education, vocational training and workforce development. With the input and assistance of a workgroup, DYFS is developing the programming for Milwaukee County's facility and is interested in pursuing many of the same programming features as New Beginnings. This workgroup has reached consensus that a youth centered, pro-social educational and community-connected network of resources is essential.

Through a Request of Interest (RFI), the Steering Committee is exploring the use of a potential third party to locate and operate a SRCCCY. There were four responders to the RFI and the next steps are to engage the potential partners and schedule an informational session and invite all respondents.

### ***Location***

The Facility & Budget workgroup has initiated a county-wide real estate search and is in the process of finalizing the project requirements with the architect. The architect has also been engaged to evaluate Vel R. Phillips Youth and Family Justice Center along with other potential locations.

Criteria have been established to assess the feasibility of these potential locations. The criteria include the following and are divided among three categories - technical, cost/location and external response:

Technical Criteria	Cost/Location	External Response
Technical feasibility of the Site (incl. environmental)	Cost of site development	Community support
Fit of site for programming	Cost of operation, maintenance	Political support
Complexity of zoning, acquisition process	Proximity to youth communities	Public school support
	Proximity to community services	
	Proximity to proposed State facility	

**Current & Future State Youth Facility Planning**

Act 185 also authorizes the State DOC to create new secure Type 1 facilities throughout Wisconsin for Serious Juvenile Offenders (SJOs) youth convicted of felonies such as aggravated battery, theft and burglary. The State plans to construct one of these new facilities in southeast Wisconsin and has held meetings to review its alternatives.

Please see Attachment 1 to this report for clarity on the types of criminal classifications, the responsibility by the State and County for each type and the facilities/programming for the current and future state.

**Recommendation**

This report is informational and no action is required.



Mary Jo Meyers, Director  
 Department of Health and Human Services

Attachment

- cc: County Executive Chris Abele
- Hon. Maxine A. White, Chief Judge
- Raisa Koltun, County Executive’s Office
- County Supervisor James “Luigi” Schmitt
- County Supervisor Supreme Moore-Omokunde
- Teig Whaley-Smith, Director, DAS
- Joseph Lamers, Director – Office of Performance, Strategy & Budget
- Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller’s Office
- Lisa Wozny, Fiscal & Management Analyst, DAS
- Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Research & Policy Analyst, Comptroller’s Office