**THE MIDDLE PENINSULA JUVENILE DETENTION COMMISSION**

FY 2018

ANNUAL REPORT

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**Charles City**

**Essex**

**Gloucester**

**Hanover**

**James City**

**King & Queen**

**King William**

**Lancaster**

**Mathews**

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**New Kent**

**Northumberland**

**Poquoson**

**Richmond**

**Westmoreland**

**Williamsburg**

**York**

**Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission**

**MERRIMAC CENTER**

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION**

**Fiscal Year 2018**

**Mission Statement**

**Juvenile Detention is the temporary and safe custody of juveniles who are accused of conduct subject to the jurisdiction of the court who require a restricted environment for their own or the community’s protection while pending legal action.**

**Further, juvenile detention provides a wide range of helpful services that support the juvenile’s physical, emotional and social development.**

**Helpful services minimally include: education, recreation, counseling, nutrition, medical and health care services, visitation, communication and continuous supervision. Juvenile detention includes a system of observation that complements the helpful services and reports findings.**

The Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission was authorized by the General Assembly and formed in 1994. Seventeen counties and two cities joined the goal of building and operating a secure juvenile detention facility. (King George County withdrew from the Commission in December 2000 leaving our current membership at 18). At that time, these localities had no guaranteed access to secure juvenile detention beds. Local law enforcement officials were transporting juveniles to detention facilities and jails throughout the Commonwealth, some as far away as Bristol on the Tennessee border. This created substantial overtime costs and removed scarce law enforcement resources from the local communities. The courts were restricted in the dispensation of their responsibilities when they had no place to hold juveniles in need of confinement, either for public safety or for sanctions. Court staff spent untold hours looking for bed space. Family contact with detained juveniles was limited due to the distance of placements. Construction of a secure juvenile detention facility, the Merrimac Center, began in the summer of 1996. On December 23, 1997, the Merrimac Center admitted its first juvenile offender.

The Center is located on Route 143, five miles south of Williamsburg city. The facility is licensed to house forty-eight youth, male and female, ages seven up to 21 who are under detention orders from a court of competent jurisdiction. The Center holds youth who are awaiting hearings in the courts as well as those who have been sentenced to detention as a sanction or for community-based treatment.

There are four housing units in the Center. One unit houses Community Placement Program (CPP) male residents and juveniles sentenced to detention for treatment (Post-dispositional/ “Post-D”), another is for older boys 16 and up, another is for boys 15 and younger, and the fourth unit houses CPP females. Both CPP units have dedicated staff. Pre-dispositional females program in a classroom and sleep on the female CPP unit.

## **Licensure:**

The Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) licenses the Center. Licensure is based on standards promulgated by the Department and the Standards for Interagency Regulation of Children’s Residential Facilities. These standards address areas of programming, treatment, medical care, education, recreation, security, safety, food service, staffing, and the physical plant.

Following our 3-year licensing audit in September 2016, it was determined that we continue to operate the Center in compliance with standards and regulations as required by the Department of Juvenile Justice. The audit team was very impressed with not only our compliance with standards, but also with our service delivery, treatment program, and progressive approach to detention. The team repeatedly commended us on the respect, dignity, and safety we provided our residents. The Center is fully licensed through February 2020.

**A Day in Detention: May 15, 2018:**

On May 15, 2018, there were 42 juveniles in residence at the Merrimac Center; 33 were boys and nine were girls. Thirteen of the 18 participating localities had youth placed in the Center. There were five female and eleven DJJ CPP participants. There were two residents sentenced by the courts to the Post-D Program, our 180-day treatment component; in addition, there were six residents sentenced for 30 days or less. Of the 42 youth in residence, 33% were being held pending action by the court. The other 67% had been adjudicated, were awaiting final disposition, or awaiting placement.

During the course of the day, there were three transports, one to court, one medical appointment, and a community service Post-D Program outing. There was one admission and no releases.

After a full day of activities, including educational study, outside recreation, community meetings, and therapeutic groups on restorative justice, all units participated in evening visitation.

**Statistics**

The Center admitted 337 juveniles and provided 13,871 child care days in FY18. The average daily population was 38, including youth in state programs. The average daily population for the localities only was 23. The average length of stay was 41 days. There were 251 males and 87 females admitted. The population ratio was 74% boys and 26% girls. Ninety-eight juveniles were sentenced to detention with sentences ranging from one to 30 days. Thirty-three were sentenced to the Post-D treatment program ranging from 31 to 180 days. The contracted DJJ programs served 34 CPP males, 14 CPP females, and CAP assessments were completed on 18 males and 8 females. There was one male resident served in the Re-Entry Program.

Including the DJJ residents, the average daily population started the year in July at 42, and consistently averaged in the high-30’s for the next eleven months. The average for June 2018 was 39, finishing with an ADP of 38 for the fiscal year. However, the average daily population for the participating localities was 23.

Charges ranged from rape, arson, assaults, technical probation violations, and other miscellaneous juvenile offenses. The largest general categories of offenses were: 74 contempt offenses (22%), 72 burglary/larceny offenses (21%), and 39 assault offenses (12%).

**Daily Activities:**

The juveniles’ time in detention should be as productive as possible. Since going to a combination of Cognitive Behavioral Training (CBT) and behavior modification in 2007, we have successfully incorporated this treatment modality while maintaining safety and security. . Cognitive Behavior Theory has long been used in residential treatment programs. Evidenced-based research continues to show it to be effective in changing the thinking and behavior of at-risk youth in detention programs. This is a very structured program employing three groups per day plus weekly goals for specific individual problems. This is a positive approach to teaching new skills and behaviors as opposed to a punitive approach

Group topics include moral decision-making, girls’ growth, anger management, rational behavior training, goal setting, life skills training, restorative justice, risk management, and social skills training. Staff and youth utilize curriculum-based manuals for the majority of groups. The DJJ programs also receive Aggression Replacement Training (ART), an evidenced-based program and Girl’s Circle, a gender-responsive program. LaunchPad Counseling, an agency in Richmond, provides in-house substance abuse group and individual therapy by a licensed therapist.

The Center does not have television. A Netflix account is maintained where staff and residents may select educational and appropriately-rated movies for weekend viewing. For special national events, which are positive cultural experiences, exceptions are sometimes made to allow residents to view these as they occur.

The Center works with other agencies, volunteers, and community-based groups to supplement services. The Williamsburg Master Gardeners, Good News Jail and Prison Ministries, certified therapy dog program and trainer, a therapeutic drumming leader, William & Mary Mentors, Royal Rangers, and other individual volunteers provided a variety of character and skill-building opportunities for the youth.

The Master Gardeners and local business persons conduct classes in horticulture. Local churches provide support throughout the year by providing holiday gifts, games, crafts and program supplies. The Pet Therapy Program provides a guided interaction between the dogs and the residents, which has been linked to positive effects on youth exposed to stress, trauma, mental health disorders, and an increase in empathy. Our therapeutic drumming program not only allows for residents to learn about the African culture and how to play African drums, but also serves as an artistic outlet and promotes unity amongst the residents.

The William & Mary Mentors host activities and events on campus for the Post-D Program residents; however, they also provide mentors during the school year who visit the Center on Saturdays. The mentors interact with all residents by engaging in activities and games. Good News Jail Ministries conducts group religious services and religious studies twice a week. Royal Rangers provides activity-based group ministry twice a month. Royal Rangers also hosted a holiday and summer cookout for the residents and staff. Resident attendance is always voluntary. Residents may also meet with their individual religious counselors upon request.

The York/Poquoson Citizen’s Academy continues to be involved with semi-annual visits to the Center.

**Mental Health Services:**

At the point of admission, each juvenile is administered the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument-2 (MAYSI-2), a self-report mental health screening instrument. The MAYSI-2 measures six scales. A “caution” means the resident needs services but is not in a critical state. A “warning” means that services are needed immediately. Many juveniles score a “caution” or “warning” on multiple scales. (The table below represents the percentage of 319 youth that scored within the “caution” or “warning” range for the particular scale upon their admission). Similar to last year, 72% of youth reported that they are victims or witnesses of traumatic events: domestic violence, murder, beatings, sexual abuse, etc.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Scale** | **Caution** | **Warning** | **Traumatic Experiences** | |
| **%** | **%** | **No %** | **Yes %** |
| Alcohol/Drug Use | 32% | 12% |  |  |
| Angry-Irritable | 32% | 9% |  |  |
| Depressed-Anxious | 26% | 8% |  |  |
| Somatic Complaints | 44% | 8% |  |  |
| Suicide Ideation | 21% | 11% |  |  |
| Thought Disturbance | 20% | 7% |  |  |
| Traumatic Experiences |  |  | 28% | 72% |

A significant portion of the resident population experience psychiatric problems. These cases require continuous assessment and monitoring. Two clinicians employed by Colonial Behavioral Health (CBH) and working on-site provide assessments, crisis counseling, individual, group and family counseling, and case management to the residents. These positions also provide information to the courts and parents and assist the post-dispositional program staff. A board-certified child psychiatrist, also employed by CBH, assesses youth for psychiatric needs and provides medication management weekly through tele-psychiatry.

The mental health clinicians assess residents who have scores on their admission mental health screenings indicating a potential mental health or substance abuse problem, who have been identified in the community as needing mental health services, and those referred by staff who have observed troublesome behavior. The clinicians provide individual and group counseling and education, refer residents and families for services in the community, inform the Court of juvenile mental health needs, and work with the courts, family and mental health system to obtain emergency hospitalization if needed. In FY18, 12 residents were assessed by CBH Emergency Services; however, none had to be temporarily detained in a psychiatric facility due to our ability to safely manage their behaviors within the facility. Having the mental health counselors on site for the past eleven years has contributed to improved management of mental health issues among the youth..

**Medical Services:**

A full-time registered nurse provides daily medical services. Many direct care staff are certified as medication agents enabling them to administer medications and first aid when the nurse is off duty. Under the supervision of a contracted physician, a nurse practitioner provided on-site medical services at least twice monthly or as needed. Local vendors provide emergency medical and dental care and specialty consultation.

Each juvenile receives a physical screening at the time of admission and a more thorough assessment by the nurse within 72 hours of placement. Sick calls are taken twice a day to address resident medical needs. The most prevalent treatments are for headaches, colds, upper respiratory infections, pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and evaluation and monitoring of psychotropic medications.

**Education Program:**

The daily schedule for the juveniles includes five and three-quarters hours of school per day. The Williamsburg James City County School System employs the educational staff. Nine full time teachers are assigned to the Center. These nine teachers, an administrative assistant, and a principal deliver the educational program for the Center. This comprehensive, accredited educational program includes teaching all subjects and sending reports to the juvenile’s home school. A computer lab and Smart Boards support the program.

A green house and garden plots support the Center’s horticulture program. The local Master Gardeners provide instruction and support while overseeing this vocational training program.

Juveniles receive credit for their attendance and for the work completed while in the detention center school. Standards of Learning (SOLs) and semester tests are administered at the Center. Tutors are provided for those students taking subjects that cannot be taught by the education staff. Preparation and testing for the General Equivalence Diploma (GED) is a part of the educational program. This year Merrimac was approved as a GED testing site, so residents do not need to go into the community for this service, and the test can be given at any time. Over the past year, one student received their GED and three others received their regular diploma. These are impressive accomplishments for the residents, teachers, and staff.

The education program emphasizes reading skills. The reading teacher provides extra help to students. The Center staff provides an evening and weekend reading program. The students listen to books on tape and read along in their individual books. Program evaluation has shown that reading interest and comprehension is increased because of using this program. The education program provides an extensive reading library. The York County and Williamsburg Regional Libraries, community groups, and citizens contribute books and magazine subscriptions for use by our residents.

The education department continued to enhance their reading component with “Literacy Lunches,” a reading / book club for residents to further their exposure to literature and process this experience in a monthly group of peer readers. At the end of the book, they are rewarded with a pizza lunch and refreshments. Education also continues to use WittFitt Stability Balls for one classroom to assist ADHD students with their focus and concentration.

The teachers are eleven-month employees, having the month of July off as their summer break. During June and August when regular public school is not in session, they provide remedial instruction and an enrichment program. A combination of class work and speakers from the community provide the residents with exposure to a variety of topics and career choices

**Treatment Programs:**

Merrimac Center Programs have continued to grow over the past year and account for close to 50% of the facility population over the course of the year.  We now have five programs running simultaneously: Post-D, CPP males, CPP females, DJJ Intakes, and Re-Entry Program.  At present, Merrimac’s CPP female program is the only CPP program for females in the Commonwealth.

The Center provides a Post-D Program for juveniles sentenced to 180 days. The program is co-ed and has a licensed capacity for fifteen placements. The treatment coordinator works closely with court staff, residents, and their families, to identify needs and appropriate services to develop and implement individualized treatment plans. Designated program staff provide programming to address areas identified in treatment plans. Resident progress towards treatment goals is reviewed by the treatment team and the court every 30 days. A mental health clinician provides individual and group counseling, in conjunction with the treatment coordinator who provides program participants with case management. The program includes opportunities for family engagement and coordinates transition services to help the residents and the families succeed after release. Residents often participate in community activities and home-based services.

The Post-D program has continued to foster the horticultural components that make it unique; including but not limited to, utilization of the greenhouse, raised beds, hydroponics system, vermiculture, composting bin, and caring for chickens on-site.  The Post-D residents have also continued to work cooperatively with the Master Gardeners to expand their knowledge base and appreciation for horticultural endeavors in the community.

The William and Mary Mentor program continues to be a rich resource for the Post-D life skills and careers class.  The residents travel to the college twice weekly during the school year to interact with the student mentors in various capacities from participation in team building activities and games, to academic planning, career exploration, and development of positive outlets for creativity and responsible citizenship.  They have also continued their efforts in restorative justice through weekly community service work at Erase the Need where the Post-D residents have become a valued resource in the organizations mission.

The Center’s Think Pawsitive Program began regular operation in February of 2018. CPP program and the Post-D residents work cooperatively having a weekly session with a local dog trainer to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to train our facility foster dogs in basic obedience. Foster dogs are provided by Heritage Humane Society. The residents are responsible for the daily care, socialization, and training of the dogs. Allowing 6-8 weeks of dedicated training, the dogs then test for their Canine Good Citizenship Certification, are adopted, and the process repeats. Think Pawsitive teaches residents responsibility, empathy, communication skills, cooperation, stress tolerance, discipline, and problem-solving skills. It provides residents with an opportunity to give back to the community in a positive manner and assists both dogs and residents toward becoming good citizens.

A teacher specializing in vocational education and life skills is assigned to this program. In addition to the regular education program, identifying career interests, getting and succeeding in a job, and preparing for independent living are part of the Post-D curriculum. Upon completion of the program, each student has a portfolio displaying their knowledge, skills and abilities. This teacher also serves as a transition teacher, integrating the student back into the home school, college, or workplace. The Post-D teacher is also an integral part of the programs engagement in horticultural endeavors, the William and Mary Mentor program, and community service opportunities. Students may work or volunteer in the community and participate in job shadowing. This teacher also assists students in working towards their high school diploma, prepares eligible students for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED), and provides certification programs for various trades and post-secondary educational endeavors.

Post-D residents have adapted well to the inclusion of the Re-Entryand CPP programs for youth transitioning home from the DJJ correctional facilities and/or completing their commitment status and mandated treatment locally.  While some of their programming overlaps, the Post-D residents also have the added expectation of maintaining positive progress in their phase advancement.  Doing so affords them the opportunity to participate in educational and recreational activities including going to theaters, parks, the Norfolk Zoo, fishing trips, etiquette luncheons, service projects, and the list goes on.

Several program residents have worked on the development of soft skills, sought out employment opportunities prior to release, and accomplished educational goals while in programs (including grade advancement, earning their GED, receiving their high school diploma, and applying for/registering for higher education).

Both the male and female CPP programs have operated at capacity throughout the year. The case manager for the male CPP program has continued to coordinate services (including individual and group substance abuse treatment and therapy offered by our contracted therapist from Launchpad Counseling), provides Aggression Replacement Training (ART), hosts a weekly drum circle, and offers support and guidance for residents as they prepare to transition back into the community. The female CPP program has a therapist/case manager as well to provide ART, Girl’s Circle (an evidence-based gender-specific program), individual and group substance abuse treatment, trauma-informed care, and transitional services. The CPP residents, many from surrounding localities not normally served by our Center, have acclimated very well to the Merrimac culture of cognitive behavior training to change irrational thoughts and beliefs.

**Food Service:**

Four full-time staff comprise the food service program. All staff are required to maintain Food Service Manager Certification and/or attend training provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Juvenile Justice. The Department of Juvenile Justice conducts inspections and the local Health Department to ensure the menu meets nutritional standards, as well as health and sanitation regulations.

Mandated USDA menu changes required the Center’s Kitchen Manager/Senior Cook to seek additional vendor resources and alternative food items. New menus were implemented, and the USDA reporting manual updated. The kitchen staff are newly-required to complete an additional 8 hours of USDA-specific training in a calendar year. This training is being done via webinars to minimize costs. A new kitchen manager was recruited this year. She is a retired York County school-division cafeteria manager with all required certifications.

With the Center entering its twenty-first year of operation, some of the heavily used kitchen equipment is starting to require repair. Several repairs have been made to the ice machine, warm box, and steamer. A new warm box will likely be needed this year.

The Center participates in the Department of Agriculture’s School Food Lunch program. Meals must meet standards for nutritional value, fats, and calories. There were 37,949 meals served last year. The kitchen also prepares evening snacks and special diets for the residents. Refreshments for special occasions and meetings are prepared as well.

**Management:**

Financially, although member locality contributions were down significantly due to the reduction of utilization of the Center, the CPP program income was able to compensate for the locality shortage.  Management continues to garner savings in all areas possible.  Ultimately, this year there was no budget shortfall, but rather a surplus of funds that was put into a capital fund totaling $381,742, due to the anticipated needs of an aging facility.  The cash reserve balance is in compliance with the Service Agreement requirement that there be a 60-day operating reserve maintained.

After several years of hard work by a committee of the Commission to examine revising the billing process stipulated in the service agreement, the Commission approved the revision for FY18.  The service agreement was changed by legal counsel to a 5-year averaging process, which helped smooth out the unusual highs and lows and unpredictability that cause budget difficulties for jurisdictions. Commission members have been pleased with the result, particularly its allowance for members to present a solid budget to their governing bodies.

A Management Plan is written each year to identify short and long-term goals. Five areas are addressed: personnel, programming, quality assurance, public relations, and capital improvements. We are happy to report meeting or making significant progress on all goals outlined in our Management Plan.

The Leadership Team comprised of the director, the deputy director, the operations /quality assurance manager, treatment program coordinator, supervisors, counselor III’s, mental health, education, medical, and information technology leaders meet on a quarterly basis. These are productive planning and review sessions to ensure policy/procedure compliance to better coordinate services while maintaining safety and security.

**Personnel:**

In terms of hiring, the 16pf Security Selection Report Tool was implemented in 2017 which gives an overview of potential employees’ emotional adjustment, integrity/ control, intellectual efficiency, and interpersonal relations. While this tool has been helpful, we continue to explore options to more accurately assess a candidate’s likelihood of success in this field. Full-time staff turnover rate was 21% in FY18, down from 28% in FY17. We have maintained a highly motivated team and finished the year with 57 full time staff. Seventeen new staff were hired in FY18.

**Training:**

We were able to meet our training requirements for all staff utilizing our general staff meetings, self-study courses, and annually scheduled training sessions. Staff received required annual training for Handle with Care, CPR, First Aid, Medication Administration, Behavior Management, Suicide Intervention, Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting, Professional Boundaries, Emergency Response, Fire Safety, and Blood Borne Pathogens. The self-study courses aided in reducing staffing issues and overtime costs. We additionally brought in guest trainers who conducted trainings on Cognitive Behavioral Group Facilitation Skills, Self-Care/Compassion, and Risk Management. New supervisory staff also attended the statewide Mid-Level Manager’s Training. The treatment coordinator was also trained in Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) Re-Assessment required for the DJJ CPP programs. CPP staff were sent to obtain training in Girl’s Circle, an evidenced-based nationally-recognized gender-specific program which was implemented with CPP females. The CPP case manager also received 8 weeks of training to allow her to facilitate drum circles.

**Prison Rape Elimination Act Policy:**

It is the policy of the Merrimac Center to fully comply with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) of 2003 and the national standards promulgated by the United States Department of Justice to prevent, detect and respond to prison rape under PREA, and to provide a safe, humane and secure environment for all residents free of sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

PREA is a federal law established to support the elimination and prevention of sexual assault and sexual misconduct in correctional systems, including juvenile facilities. PREA addresses both resident-to-resident sexual assault and staff-to-resident sexual assault. Merrimac Center maintains a zero-tolerance policy for resident-on resident sexual assault, staff sexual misconduct and sexual harassment towards residents. Every allegation of sexual assault, misconduct and harassment is thoroughly investigated, and all reports of sexual assault are referred to the James City County Police Department for criminal investigation.

When a resident first enters our intake area, a comprehensive educational process is started to provide initial and ongoing education explaining their rights to be free from sexual abuse and harassment. An assessment is conducted on all residents at the time of intake to determine their individual risk of victimization or predation using an objective measurement tool based on specific risk factors.

Merrimac Center was audited July 2016 on over 250 standards and the subsections of the law. Our PREA program quickly achieved full compliance. The next scheduled audit will be July 2019. The most recent PREA Annual Report is located on the facility website and posted in the lobby.

**Transportation:**

The Commission provides all transportation once the juvenile is admitted to the detention facility. We are the only detention center of 24 facilities statewide to provide all transportation. Staffed by on-call employees, transportation is provided to court hearings, medical and counseling appointments, placement interviews, and to other residential placements. The transportation staff safely performed over 1,000 transports.

**Facility Improvements:**

In FY18, at the Commission’s request, the Center began to explore obtaining an Energy Performance Contract with the assistance of the Division of Mines Minerals and Energy. If an energy saving company (ESCO) is chosen to do a technical audit of the building, the audit will identify upcoming needs and areas where there could be cost savings through energy upgrades. This process has been ongoing and is anticipated to continue into FY19.

Due to surplus funds and cost savings, the Center was able to make numerous facility upgrades that were needed this year. A new “soft” gym floor was installed to improve safety and lessen injuries for the residents which tend to occur most frequently in that area. The property room which contains all the residents’ belongings as well as uniforms, hygiene items, etc. was completely renovated. By adding closed cabinets and containers we are able to provide much better organization, easing the burden on staff to locate needed items for the residents. As well, we were able to paint the sally port and gym, including the ceiling, which had previously been identified as a DJJ audit concern due to peeling paint. We were also able to paint the interior of building, which was greatly needed due to normal wear and tear. We also re-surfaced the parking lot and outdoor basketball court eliminating potholes and minimizing cracks. Due to limited storage in the building a new shed was added to the grounds to keep items that can withstand temperature fluctuations.

**Safety and Security:**

There were no significant safety and security issues this past year. During the physical restraints of youth, there were a few staff injuries this year. These incidents included knee strains, shoulder and knee injuries. Injuries to youth included sprains, minor cuts, and scrapes, generally because of recreational activities.

All incidents involving use of physical force, injury, or unusual circumstances are documented and reviewed by administrative staff. Incidents are reviewed with the staff involved to improve response, prevent future incidents, or validate proper procedures. Physical restraints typically occur with the same 10% of the residents who have significant mental health issues that have not or cannot be treated by the mental health system due to limited community resources.

A surveillance system monitors activity inside and outside the building. Forty-two cameras are recording around the clock. Intercom systems throughout the building allow continuous communication. Radios for designated staff are issued. Transportation staff utilizes individual cell phones. Audio/video recording systems are installed in transportation vehicles to protect juveniles and staff.

# **Financial Matters:**

When the Commission was formed, financing was arranged for the construction, equipment and initial staffing of the facility. As noted above, the Commission billing process was changed this year. Local contributions for FY18 were $1,716,400. Participating localities are billed quarterly.

This year the Commission received state reimbursement funds of $1,315,333 for operations and $81,331 from the USDA School Food Lunch program. Also, received was $2,800 from the Department of Juvenile Justice for state wards, $1,277,325 for community placement, $9,450 for re-entry and $130,025 for DJJ CAP assessments.

**Grants:**

In coordination with our education program, the Commission participated in the Schools and Libraries Universal Services Fund program. Through this program, we were able to receive a ninety percent discount on high-speed internet access.

The Center also was awarded a Juvenile Accountability Block Grant through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to purchase equipment to enhance efficiency and staff productivity with our Cognitive Behavior Program (CBT). The $15,000 grant funding afforded us the opportunity to purchase 11 Surface Pro tablets to enable the staff to track the residents’ behaviors in an effective an efficient way. The use of the tablets also allows us to track behavioral data that was previously unavailable. It also allowed us to move to a paperless system.

A Virginia Municipal League grant was received to enhance safety in the building. We were able to purchase enough matts to cover the two walls behind the basketball hoops in the gym to prevent resident injury.

**Public Relations:** Tours for the public, professional groups, service agencies, schools and governmental entities are conducted year-round.  The facility’s Spring Open House was a huge success this year. In attendance were approximately 60 guests including our volunteers, interns, community partners, court-personnel, Commission members, state senator, plus many of our staff and teachers.  The presentations by the residents included a flash mob dance, original poetry, artwork, two expressive dances, African drumming performance, and a viewing of the drumming documentary created with our residents called “Rhythm Moves.” Everyone also enjoyed a delicious lunch hosted by our own kitchen staff.  Tours of the Center were conducted and guests had the opportunity to purchase flower and vegetable plants from our own garden maintained by our post-dispositional residents.  The residents also painted birdhouses, which were purchased by guests.

A special project that we were involved in this year included the making of a documentary. Merrimac Center partnered with the founder of “Rhythm Moves Live,” a holistic educational program, for this filming. The residents participated in interactive rhythm circles, cultural arts lessons, and were exposed to unique and historical instruments. They additionally received and participated in demonstrations of Capoeira Dance.

Merrimac Center also gives presentations for civic, educational and professional groups on an ongoing basis throughout the year.  The volunteer program also serves to make the Center a part of the community.  Working relationships with the DJJ, the courts, collateral service agencies, and other juvenile facilities have been positive and productive. Management and staff have taken on a leadership role in statewide advocacy organizations including the Virginia Juvenile Detention Association (VJDA) and the Virginia Juvenile Justice Association (VJJA).

**Summary:**

The Center has fulfilled its mission this past year in providing a safe, secure environment for juveniles placed here by the courts. Education requirements and basic needs have been met. Intensive, structured, and evidenced-based programming is the strength of the Center, as well as providing opportunities for the juveniles to learn life skills, pro-social behavior, self-discipline, better decision-making, and personal responsibility. Our CBT and trauma-informed components continue to be strengthened, enabling staff to respond appropriately to the most difficult residents. Juveniles have presented a variety of issues including violent and self-destructive behaviors, substance abuse and mental health challenges, medical and dental needs, and special education needs.

The Merrimac Center is regarded as a model program. The Center frequently conducts tours and shares material and ideas with other detention facilities and state agencies. The Center has a reputation as a good place to work and volunteer.

We are an integral part of the juvenile justice community and active at the local and state levels. Merrimac continues to be a leader in working to improve mental health and substance abuse services, to improve operating standards, to identify new best-practice treatment programs, and to develop / implement effective staff training.

The Commission members continue to be active throughout the year in their efforts to provide financial support, guidance, and encouragement to improve services to our youth. We look forward to another year of providing quality services and care to our residents and to the communities we serve.