

# MERRIMAC CENTER

**Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission**

Caroline  
Charles City  
Essex  
Gloucester  
Hanover  
James City  
King & Queen  
King William  
Lancaster  
Mathews  
Middlesex  
New Kent  
Northumberland  
Poquoson  
Richmond  
Westmoreland  
Williamsburg  
York



## FY 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

**THE MIDDLE PENINSULA JUVENILE DETENTION COMMISSION  
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMISSION  
Fiscal Year 2019**

**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 or serving a sentence.**

**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. 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. Our next 3-year audit is scheduled for September 2019

### **A Day in Detention: May 15, 2019:**

On May 15, 2019, there were 36 juveniles in residence at the Merrimac Center; 27 were boys and nine were girls. Thirteen of the 18 participating localities had youth placed in the Center. There were seven female and eight male DJJ CPP participants. There was one resident sentenced by the courts to the Post-D Program, our 180-day treatment component; in addition, there were four residents sentenced for 30 days or less. Of the 36 youth in residence, 33% were being held pending action by the court. The other 67% had been adjudicated, were awaiting final disposition, awaiting placement, or serving their commitment status.

During the course of the day, there were two transports, one to court and one to a medical appointment. There were no admissions and one release.

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**

Down from last year, the Center admitted 310 juveniles and provided 12,552 child care days in FY19. The average daily population was 34, including youth in state programs. The average daily population for the localities was down to 19 from 23 last last year and the state juvenile average daily population was 15. The average length of stay was 41 days. There were 250 males and 60 females admitted. The population ratio was 80% boys and 20% girls. Sixty-nine juveniles were sentenced to detention with sentences ranging from one to 30 days. Twenty-two were sentenced to the Post-D treatment program ranging from 31 to 180 days. The contracted DJJ programs served 29 CPP males, 12 CPP females, and CAP assessments were completed on 16 males and 3 females. There was one female resident served in the Re-Entry Program.

We have received numerous DJJ program youth sentenced as "serious offenders" for up to three years or until the age of 21. This population has changed the dynamics of the direct care of the youth including increasing medical/ dental needs, the level of ongoing treatment, staff

interventions, and the overall length of stay for the Center. As an ever-changing and maturing population, new challenges and rewards for staff are created. Notably, unlike many other detention centers nationwide, Merrimac does not have a disproportionate minority population.

Charges ranged from rape, arson, assaults, technical probation violations, and other miscellaneous juvenile offenses. The largest general categories of offenses were: 54 contempt offenses (18%), 47 assault offenses (16%) and, significantly lower than last year, 45 burglary/larceny offenses (15%).

### **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 for our CPP males. The CPP females receive therapeutic services, including substance abuse group and trauma informed individual counseling, through our in-house CPP Case Manager/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. They additionally view news sources for current event topics once a week.

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, 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 host an annual 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.

### **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 295 youth that scored within the “caution” or “warning” range for the particular scale upon their admission). 48% of residents were considered a “critical case.” Similar to last year, 69% 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	25%	10%		
Angry-Irritable	34%	11%		
Depressed-Anxious	30%	9%		
Somatic Complaints	47%	9%		
Suicide Ideation	18%	14%		
Thought Disturbance	22%	8%		
Traumatic Experiences			31%	69%

A significant portion of the resident population experience psychiatric problems. These cases require continuous assessment and monitoring. As of October 2018, the case management position employed by Colonial Behavioral Health (CBH) remained unfilled and was then officially eliminated by CBH effective June 30, 2019. Our assigned CBH mental health therapist continues

to provide assessments, crisis counseling, individual, group and family counseling, and case management services to the residents. This position also provides information to the courts and parents and assists 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 clinician assesses 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 clinician provides individual and group counseling and education, refers residents and families for services in the community, informs the Court of juvenile mental health needs, and works with the courts, family, and mental health system to obtain emergency hospitalization if needed. In FY19, three 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 twelve years has contributed to improved management of mental health issues among the youth; however, the loss of the case management position has posed workload challenges.

#### **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. We also employ an on-call registered nurse to provide services and assistance as needed. A contracted physician provides on-site medical services at least twice monthly, or as needed, and provides medical oversight. Local vendors provide emergency medical, 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, sexually transmitted diseases, menstrual cramps, 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) are administered at the Center. Preparation and testing for the General Equivalence Diploma (GED) is a part of the educational program. Merrimac was been 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, eight students 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 and 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. 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 an enrichment program to incorporate fun learning experiences into the educational experience. A combination of class work and speakers from the community provide the residents with exposure to a variety of topics.

The addition of the CPP programs at Merrimac has changed the landscape of our educational needs and offerings. The residents that are being detained locally to serve their commitment status for longer periods of time are typically older, not permitted by the court to leave the premises (as serious offenders), and have completed their high school education/GED requirements. In April 2019, Merrimac added a career-readiness specialist to our staff roster to serve the growing post-secondary population. This position is overseen by the treatment program manager, rather than the education department, and is tasked with providing educational and vocational training opportunities to our post-secondary students. Post-Secondary students are offered individualized educational resources and can pursue certifications, college degrees, and life skills training through online programs offered through Thomas Nelson Community College, Tidewater Community College, Coursera, Penn Foster, ToolingU, and 360Training. Post-Secondary students also work on career assessments, soft skills training, interview skills, and resume writing.

#### **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 the Re-Entry Program. Merrimac’s CPP female program was the only CPP program for females in the Commonwealth until July 2019 when Northern Virginia contracted to also offer CPP services exclusively for females.

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 program manager 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 program manager 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 while in the Post-D Program.

Post-D Program placement numbers have decreased over the past few years coinciding with the expansion of CPP. Throughout the past year, 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 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 continued to be a rich resource for the Post-D life skills and careers class. The residents traveled 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 also continued their efforts in restorative justice through weekly community service work at Erase the Need where the Post-D residents had become a valued resource in the organization's mission. With the smaller Post-D Program population, some of these components have been placed on hiatus as of May 2019 (Post-D consisted of one resident at that time). Resources, particularly the Post-D teacher position, have been restructured to ensure that a larger portion of our facility residents receive instruction and supervision in-house; however, community interaction and engagement opportunities will continue to be of importance to the Post-D program as population dictates.

The Center's "Think Pawsitive" dog fostering/ training program, in conjunction with a volunteer trainer and Heritage Humane Society began operation in February of 2018. It has been very successful in teaching the juveniles responsibility, empathy, cooperation, discipline, and problem-solving skills. Recognizing the value of animals and their therapeutic qualities, we want to continue to offer a unique care component to our programs.

Through June 2019, a teacher specializing in vocational education and life skills was assigned to the Post-D 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 served as a transition teacher, integrating the student back into the home, school, college, or workplace. The Post-D teacher was also an integral part of the program's engagement in horticultural endeavors, the William and Mary Mentor program, and community service opportunities. Post-D students may work or volunteer in the community and participate in job shadowing. Although the position has been restructured, these services will still be offered in various capacities to any Post-D placements in the future. This teacher continues to assist all Merrimac 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-Entry and 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, as well as the opportunity to earn weekend home passes.

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, applying for/registering for higher education, and obtaining employment).

Both the male and female CPP programs have operated at capacity or above 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. Likewise, the new female CPP program therapist/case manager, hired in November 2018, provides ART, Girl's Circle (an evidence-based gender-specific program), individual and group substance abuse treatment, trauma-informed care, and transitional services to our female CPP population. A graduate student/volunteer from the College of William and Mary also returned this year to provide several hours of supportive individual sessions with our female CPP population; she designed a curriculum which addressed character strengths and virtues which she successfully delivered to some of our more challenging clients. 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.

In an effort to provide work experience for the long term CPP residents, a Canteen Manager position was created. Residents are expected to apply and interview for this position; once selected, they have the responsibility to complete inventory, stock, gather orders, deliver canteen throughout the facility, and manage resident coupons.

In the winter of 2018, Merrimac Center partnered with Community of Faith Mission to provide laundering services of bedding used by local churches that provide temporary housing for the homeless population. The churches rotate providing shelter for a week at a time. On Thursday mornings the church brought Merrimac Center the used bedding. A long-term CPP resident used the facility washer and dryer to wash, dry, fold, and bag the clean laundry for pick up on Friday mornings. We intend to continue this community partnership in November 2019 and will again require that residents apply and interview for the position.

#### **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 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. Two cooks retired in the past year. A third cook moved on for an elevated position. Three cooks were recruited, all from the York County school-division.

With the Center entering its twenty-second 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 steamer was purchased 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 41,546 meals served last year. The kitchen also prepares after school snack, evening snacks, and accommodates special diets for the residents. Refreshments for special occasions and meetings are prepared, as well.

In January of 2019, we implemented a salad bar for staff and residents. Staff are currently afforded one meal per work day, but the addition of the salad bar has been a healthy benefit for all.

#### **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 \$701,836, due to the anticipated needs of an aging facility. That brings the capital fund to \$1,083,578. The cash reserve balance is in compliance with the Service Agreement requirement that there be a 60-day operating reserve maintained.

In addition, this year the Center obtained its own Virginia Retirement System (VRS) account. This enabled us to lower VRS cost by 2.84% and have more access to VRS information.

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 manager, 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 and to better coordinate services while maintaining safety and security. These meetings also allow for open communication and input regarding various Center issues.

### **Personnel**

Recruitment and retention of full time staff has proven to be more challenging in FY19. Exit interviews reveal that primary reasons for resigning include shift work schedules and lack of upward mobility. Full-time staff turnover rate was 31% in FY19, which is up 10% from FY18. However, this is in line with averages currently seen across the state. We use a variety of sources to advertise current positions, such as Indeed, Zip Recruiter, local government sites, our website, social media, and signage. We continue to use the 16pf Security Selection Report Tool as a screening instrument designed to assess potential employees' emotional adjustment, integrity/control, intellectual efficiency, and interpersonal relations. Despite the recent challenges, we have maintained a highly motivated team and finished the year with 64 full time staff. Twelve new staff were hired in FY19.

### **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 and online webinars aid in reducing staffing issues and overtime costs. We additionally utilized our in-house mental health staff to deliver training on adolescent brain development and trauma. Supervisory staff attended the statewide Mid-Level Manager's Training. We also certified one additional staff member as a Gang Specialist.

We continue to facilitate two evidence based programs, Girl's Circle and Aggression Replacement Training (ART), for our CPP residents. Eight additional staff were trained in ART. One additional female CPP staff and the designated program therapist were trained to facilitate the Girl's Circle Program. The Deputy Director completed Virginia Commonwealth University's Grace E. Harris

Leadership Institute and provided supervisors with additional skills and strategies to enhance their staff development practices.

#### **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. We are very fortunate to have two Department of Justice certified PREA auditors on the administrative team to continually monitor compliance.

#### **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 900 transports to all 18 Commission jurisdictions and additional jurisdictions that place our CPP youth.

#### **Facility Improvements:**

In FY18, at the Commission's request due to our building being over 20 years old, the Center began to explore obtaining an Energy Performance Contract with the assistance of the Division of Mines Minerals and Energy. Many of the systems, while still functioning, have reached the end of their useful life. ABM Building Services, L.L.C. , an energy saving company (ESCO), was chosen to do a technical audit of the building. The audit identified upcoming needs and areas where there could be cost savings through energy upgrades. This process has been ongoing and the contract is anticipated to be finalized in FY20 allowing the construction to begin. Some of the

identified areas of needed improvement include boiler plant, chiller, building automation system, and HVAC, and LED lighting upgrades, as well as outdoor air reduction via cold plasma ionization.

This year the facility was able to use surplus funds to upgrade the mental health office. Prior to the upgrade, this office was a supply closet. New lighting, paint, built-in cabinets, furniture, and flooring have made the office more conducive to the provision of mental health counseling services. Also, the intake area was renovated. This area previously stored admission files that were located in numerous file cabinets. The staff work stations were recycled aging desks in need of replacement. Additionally, a location was needed for the new career-readiness specialist position. The intake area was identified to lessen interruptions and noise for post-secondary students to focus on their work. A design was installed to increase work stations to three with privacy partitions and space-saving built-in lateral cabinets. New flooring complimented the finished product.

#### **Safety, Security, and Technology:**

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 back 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 to 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. A camera was also added this year to our laundry room to ensure resident safety while providing the laundry service for Community of Faith Mission's homeless program.

#### **Financial Matters:**

With the approval of the energy performance savings project, the Commission approved financing the project through a local bank with payments beginning in 2020. It is anticipated that some of the expense of the loan repayment will come from the capital reserve account, as well as from expense reductions.

Local contributions for FY19 were \$1,827,818. Participating localities are billed quarterly. This year the Commission received state reimbursement funds of \$1,326,621 for operations and \$77,920 from the USDA School Food Lunch program. Also, received was \$4,850 from the Department of Juvenile Justice for state wards, \$1,371,572 for community placement, \$5,200 for re-entry and \$114,975 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 90% discount on high-speed internet access.

A Virginia Municipal League Grant was also received to enhance physical security measures in the main entrance/administrative area of the building. This included the purchase and installation of bullet-resistant/missile-proof glass to better control access points.

**Public Relations:**

Tours for the public, professional and civic groups, service agencies, schools, and governmental entities are conducted year-round. The York/Poquoson Citizen's Academy and LEAD Greater Williamsburg continue to be involved with visits to the Center. We additionally hosted an informational session/tour for the Virginia Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice. Also, a presentation was made to the York County Board of Supervisors and broadcast for York County residents. Merrimac also hosted Northern VA Detention CPP female program staff as they prepared to start their own CPP program and consulted with Rappahannock Detention Center staff as they considered changes to their facility utilization. We were also honored to host a CPP Family Day Barbeque.

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 Detention Association of Post-Dispositional Programs (VDAPP).

In an effort to display the innovation, progress, and successes of our program, staff, and residents, a Facebook account was established. This allows us to share events, stories, and needs with the public.

Merrimac also has a positive working relationship with Virginia Peninsula Regional Jail which provides lawn care for the Center. Upon replacing our mattresses, we were able to donate 50 older mattresses for the jail's use.

**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 it is a desirable placement for college internships and volunteer opportunities.

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.