Welcome Spring 2018! Finally, it’s a bit warmer and daylight is staying around a bit longer. Spring brings about new beginnings and familiar events everywhere. Across our state, we have witnessed the blooming of the wildflowers and will celebrate the Easter holidays, both of which mark the beginning of new life. Earlier this year, we welcomed a new Executive Director – Ms. Camille Cain – who took over the leadership of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Ms. Cain is moving the agency forward to ensure your children continue to receive the very best treatment and positive outcomes while they are in our care.

This April edition of the Family Connection provides you with information about the facilities where your child is assigned, and various treatment and other programs available to him or her. We will highlight our other facilities in upcoming issues. The April Family Connection spotlights another family voice in our “Family to Family” column, and we encourage you to talk with your Family Liaison so we can tell your family’s story in an upcoming issue.

As always, your child and his or her success is our main goal. Please join us for our upcoming events and help us celebrate our programs and customary events.

Suzanne
Family and Community Program Supervisor
**Family to Family**

Families – it’s been a very hard and long wait for me for the return of my daughter. My baby girl left at the age of 12½; she was turning 13 the week she went into TJJD.

No matter how often we talk on the phone, there was still an emptiness because she wasn’t here. Truly, I wanted the best for her and I did what I felt would help her. I can honestly say I don’t regret it, because she has become a beautiful young lady and she understands why the choice was made.

Truly, she had a hard time for a while; I know my daughter. I learned to speak wisdom into her life, I learned to be gentle with her and listen. The most important thing I learned is to tell her the truth and to never, ever belittle her. I told my daughter how smart she was and the great things she can do when she comes home because she is somebody.

Her past mistakes don’t define her, it’s who she is today and her willingness to reach goals in her life. So, we have a plan in store for the whole family to help her reach those goals. We can never let go of our children; we ourselves have to live a lifestyle before our children in order for them to understand that we have to live life on life’s terms.

You may be a family that felt you were doing everything right, and then ask yourselves where you went wrong. Well, stop asking yourself that question! When I made the step to get my daughter some help, I felt peace. I didn’t have to worry about her being raped, beaten, kidnapped or killed. Or getting pregnant – a baby having a baby. I would have had to raise her and the baby, and in no way were we ready for that.

As I look back when all this began, and I called the police on her, I am grateful that I saved my daughter. I can deal with her locked down, much more than I could if she was dead.

So, families – love your children where they are. Don’t give up on them. Praise them even if you don’t feel they deserve it. Children are very smart in these times and they know when you are real or not, so be honest with them in a soft voice and let them know you will not give up on them. ~ Contesa H.

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**About the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Program**

Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) operates substance use treatment programs throughout the state. These programs are designed to address each youth’s individual Alcohol or Other Drugs (AOD) treatment need. We recognize that untreated substance use contributes to the increased risk of re-offending, and that many youth that enter TJJD have been placed here due to their substance use disorder. Alcohol or other drug use is often a prime contributor to their offense and needs to be addressed.

AOD programs provide treatment services to youth who have a diagnosis of Substance-Related Disorder or those identified as having high risk in the area of alcohol or other drugs. TJJD offers a full set of AOD services including: Alcohol or Other Drug Psycho-educational classes, short-term/moderate need treatment programs and supportive residential (high need) programs. Every facility and halfway house offers some form of AOD treatment or services. Youth are placed in a facility based on their treatment need.

Youth are assessed to determine if there is a need for specialized AOD treatment at the Orientation and Assessment Unit (Brownwood). If your child has been selected to receive AOD treatment, the following information may be beneficial to you. Addiction is a family problem. Every alcohol or drug addicted child has to fight back against his or her addictions, and chances are, nearly all of these youth have family members and friends rooting for their recovery and return home.

While in the AOD program, your child’s criminal behavior will be addressed through linking the use of drugs to his or her life story and offense(s). Your child will have the opportunity to examine his or her life stories, offense histories and relapse cycles. This is done through evidence-based treatment curriculum and substance abuse education, social skills training, group and individual counseling and relapse prevention.

You may have questions and concerns, especially how you can help your child with his or her AOD issues, not just while they are in TJJD but also when they return home and to the community. You may also be concerned or in need of help in finding a support group for families of addicts, dealing with your child and his or her addiction, and finding help for yourself.

It is important that you and your family take care of your own health, so that you can provide the love and support your child needs in order to heal. A resource available to you is Al-Anon and/or Nar-Anon. These are mutual support programs for people whose lives have been affected by someone else’s drinking or drug use. By sharing common experiences and applying the program principles, families and friends of alcoholics and addicts can bring positive changes to their individual situations, whether or not the alcoholic or addict – your child – admits the existence of a problem, seeks help or actively participates in his or her treatment program.

Attending these meetings and hearing from others who have been where you are can give you hope. Discovering that you are accepted unconditionally, no matter what problems you have, can give you relief. Being a part of a recovering process can give you strength.

If you have questions or are wondering if Al-Anon or Nar-Anon would help you, please explore [www.texas-al-anon.org](http://www.texas-al-anon.org) and [www.nar-anon.org](http://www.nar-anon.org) for meeting dates and times near you.
Mentoring Provides Extra Support

Have you ever stopped to think about the most important times or moments in your life? When you do, do you also think about who was there with you during those times? As children, almost everything we do in life comes with a mentor: a coach, a teacher, or a parent directing us and helping us along the way. If we were lucky, there was a caring adult looking out for our well-being. But during these times when your children are placed away from you, their family, and their home, a TJJD mentor can make a significant impact on your child’s rehabilitation.

The goal of mentoring is to develop a trusting, supportive relationship between an adult and a carefully matched youth, in which the youth is encouraged to reach his or her potential, discover his or her strengths and develop self-confidence. The mentor does not take the place of family. Instead, they are a friend who plays an important role in promoting healthy development for your child. Mentoring programs provide your child with positive adult contact, and as a result, reduce his or her risk factors (anti-social behavior, lack of commitment to school, low self-esteem) while also enhancing their protective factors (healthy beliefs, opportunities for involvement, goal-setting for their future).

Our TJJD mentors are carefully screened and selected, and are expected to make a six-month minimum commitment and spend at least 4 hours each month visiting with their assigned youth. Mentoring visits take place usually during the evening and on the weekend, and will not interfere with family visits. Youth and mentor matches are carefully made and based upon gender, age, language requirements, availability, needs and strengths, shared interests, life experiences, and preferences of the mentor and youth.

Most importantly, our research confirms that mentoring really does make a difference in reducing the chances that a youth will re-offend, and increases the chances that he or she will be successful in school. These improvements are greater when a youth and mentor work together for at least six months, and faith-based mentoring appears to be the most successful type of mentoring.

In the last year, youth in TJJD have formed friendships with 368 mentors, and we have examined the impact that mentoring has had on our youth. In fact, during 2017:

• At the time of their release, more youth who were mentored were reading at their grade level, compared to youth who were not mentored. So, we know that mentoring positively impacts reading levels.

• More youth who were mentored for at least six months earned their GED or High School diploma compared to youth who were not mentored. So, we know that mentoring positively impacts educational success.

• More youth who were not mentored compared to those youth who were mentored were rearrested within one year of release. So, we know that mentoring positively impacts re-arrest rates.

• More youth who were not mentored were re-incarcerated within 3 years of release, compared to those youth who were mentored. So, we know that mentoring positively impacts re-incarceration rates.

Our TJJD mentors provide youth with personal connectedness, guidance, skills training, career or cultural enrichment opportunities, a knowledge of spirituality and values and, perhaps most importantly, goals and hope for the future. You can help your child by encouraging them to open and honest with their mentor, and participate during mentoring visits. Remember, the results are better when mentoring lasts at least six months or more.

While mentors may be planting these seeds, it is you who will continue to nurture those seeds and watch your child blossom, as you look out for their well-being and encourage them every step of the rest of their way.

If you think your child will benefit from having a mentor, please let us know!

"Because we’re in jail and we are separated from family, the people that come out and talk to us become family. You find out you can trust people and people do help you even though they are strangers. You get closer and start knowing them and you become family. This is what mentors are to me. They’re someone you can trust, rely on, and always look to for help.”

-Trevon – on what mentoring means to him

UPCOMING FAMILY DAY EVENTS

APRIL 13 (rescheduled from Feb. 14): McLennan (Mart)
For more information: Mary Garrity
254-297-8301
Mary.Garrity@tjjd.texas.gov

APRIL 21: Evins (Edinburg)
For more information: Elva Benitez
956-289-5547
Elva.Benitez@tjjd.texas.gov

MAY 10 – 11: Ron Jackson (Brownwood)
For more information: Kevelle Bailey
325-641-4243
Kevelle.Bailey@tjjd.texas.gov

MAY 25: Gainesville
For more information: Robin Motley
940-665-0701 x268
Robin.Motley@tjjd.texas.gov

JUNE 9: Ayres House – Walter Gaskin Family Picnic
For more information: Patty Garza
210-335-8572
Patty.Garza@tjjd.texas.gov
Why is My Child Being Placed There?

We understand that having your son or daughter committed to TJJD can be a difficult experience for your family. We also know that it’s normal to be concerned about where your child is being placed and why.

Once a Juvenile Court judge has made the decision to send your child to TJJD, and orders either a specific sentence (determinate sentence) or orders a commitment period not to exceed their 19th birthday (indeterminate sentence), your child is expected to participate in his or her treatment program. Your encouragement to your child not only to participate, but also to stay out of trouble while in TJJD is important.

But you may be asking, “Why is my child being sent to that facility?” The first facility your child will go to is the Orientation and Assessment Unit at the Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex in Brownwood. While there, your child’s strengths and needs will be identified, and his or her medical, psychological, emotional and education needs will be evaluated. This allows us to determine the best way to help your child, as well as help us find out if he or she might be at risk to again break the law and commit serious offenses.

Several issues are considered when making placement assignments. First, your child will be placed according to his or her individual treatment needs, the level of security indicated by their assessments, and as close to home as possible. However, because not all treatment programs are available at all TJJD locations, your child’s treatment needs will determine where your child will be placed.

Most youth will go to one of TJJD’s secure facilities for most of their time with us. Some will go to private facilities with which TJJD contracts to provide services, and others may go to medium restriction facilities or halfway houses. If your child excels in his or her treatment program and doesn’t need to stay in a high restriction facility for the entire stay, he or she could be assigned to a halfway house before being released.

Since most youth will be assigned to a TJJD secure facility, we wanted to provide you with some information about these facilities and what they provide.

Evins Regional Juvenile Center (Edinburg, Texas) – Boys from across the state may be placed here for high and moderate levels of alcohol and other drug treatment, violent offender and anger management treatment, or general rehabilitation services.

Gainesville State School (Gainesville, Texas) – Boys from across the state may be placed here for high and moderate levels of alcohol and other drug treatment, high and moderate sexual behavior treatment, violent offender and anger management treatment, or general rehabilitation services.

Giddings State School (Giddings, Texas) – Boys from across the state may be placed here for high and moderate-level capital and violent behavior treatment, high and moderate sexual behavior treatment, and alcohol and other drug treatment. The Giddings State School also offers general rehabilitation services for younger males, ages 10 – 14.

McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility (Mart, Texas) – Boys from across the state may be placed here for general rehabilitation services, high and moderate level alcohol and other drug treatment, high and moderate level sexual behavior treatment, and violent offender and anger management treatment. Younger sex offenders are also generally housed here.

McLennan Residential Treatment Center (Mart, Texas) – Boys from across the state may be placed here for ongoing medical needs, high-level mental health treatment, aggression replacement/anger management, and moderate alcohol and other drug treatment.

Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex (Brownwood, Texas) – Girls from across the state may be placed here for all levels and types of specialized treatment or generalized rehabilitation services. It also houses the Pairing Achievement with Service (PAWS) program to a small number of boys who qualify.

In future issues of the Family Connection, we will focus on halfway houses, and high and medium restriction contracted facilities.

If you have any questions about your child’s placement and treatment program(s), please contact his or her case manager, or Lisa Colin, Program Supervisor at lisa.colin@tjjd.texas.gov or 512-490-7036.