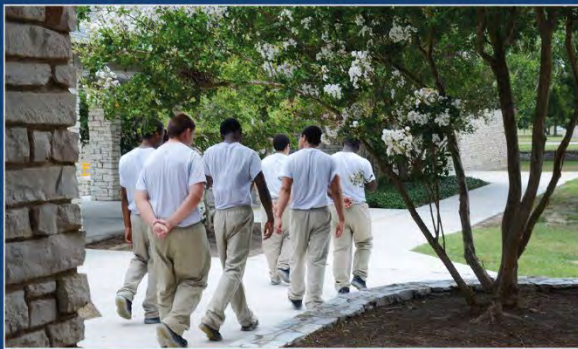




Youth Handbook

August 2026, edition 2

This handbook will help you understand what your life will be like while you are at the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD).

- This handbook will help you understand the rules and rights you have.
- Once assigned to your dorm, you may be given additional rules and information.
- Keep this handbook in a safe place so you can refer to it when you need to.
- You will be told when any information or rules in this handbook changes.
- If you have questions, all TJJD staff are here to help you!



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IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Intake, Assessment, and Orientation

Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Complex

P.O. Box 1267

Brownwood, TX 76804

325-641-4200 phone

325-646-7704 fax

24-Hour Abuse Reporting Hotline: 866-477-8354

- Hotline answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Use blue phones located in program areas
- Call this number about:
 - criminal behavior
 - abuse
 - neglect
 - exploitation

Office of Independent Ombudsman for TJJD: 855-468-7330

The purpose of the Office of Independent Ombudsman (OIO) is to investigate, evaluate, and secure the rights of youth committed to TJJD

TJJD Central Office

Texas Juvenile Justice Department

P.O. Box 12757

Austin, TX 78711

Other Contacts

- Youth Grievance Coordinator: 512-490-7235
- Reentry Team: 512-490-7768
- TJJD Release Review Panel: 512-490-7101
- Sentenced Offender Department: 512-490-7031
- Sex Offender Registration Liaison: 512-490-7289
- State-Operated Programs and Services: 512-490-7172

Your Parole Officer

Name: _____

Phone: _____

WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS AT TJJD?

While at TJJD, you will have most of the same basic rights you had before coming. Here's what you need to know.

- There will be some limits to your rights; staff will tell you what those are.
- To make sure everyone is safe and you are getting the best treatment, your rights may be limited at any time.
- If you believe your rights have been violated or that you have been treated unfairly, you can file a grievance.

YOUR BASIC RIGHTS

Right to Equal Treatment – You have the right to be free from discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin.

Right of Free Speech and Expression – You can express yourself in appropriate ways that are not disruptive or unsafe.

Right of Religious Freedom – You and your parents (if you are under 18) can decide whether or not you participate in religious activities of your choice.

Right to Personal Possessions – You can keep and use allowable personal possessions that are safe and don't disrupt programs or promote bad behavior.

Right to Receive Visitors – You can receive approved visitors and have private, in-person meetings with your family.

Right of Access to Mail and Telephone – You can send and receive letters in the mail except if they are a security risk. You will have access to phones as much as possible.

Right to Earnings and Monetary Gifts – You can have money while at TJJD. There may be a limit to the amount of cash you can have with you, and we cannot take money from your trust fund without your permission.

Right to Protection from Physical and Psychological Harm – You have the right to be protected from harm and to get clothing, shelter, and healthy food.

Right to Medical and Dental Care – You will get basic and necessary medical and dental care, both routine and emergency.

Right of Access to Attorneys – You are allowed to talk with your attorney (lawyer) in private.

Right to be Informed – TJJD will tell you about all policies, procedures, and rules affecting you.

Right to Accuracy and Fairness – Decisions made about you will be fair and correct.

Right to Confidentiality of Records – You have the right to your records being kept confidential. They will not be released except to those authorized by law.

Right to File Grievances and Appeal Decisions – You have the right to have your complaints taken care of quickly and fairly and to appeal certain decisions made about you.

WHAT ARE MY PARENTS' RIGHTS WHILE I AM AT TJJD?

While you are at TJJD, your parents will be partners with the staff you work with. They are encouraged to participate in your treatment - from the time you arrive to the time you leave. Just like you, your parents have certain rights. **Your parents have the right to know:**

- You will be treated fairly and as an individual.
- TJJD will provide a safe, secure, and sanitary environment for you.
- You will not to be judged, blamed, or labeled because of your stay at TJJD.
- They can be vocal and active supporters on your behalf.
- They can be active participants when decisions are made about you.
- They will be informed about matters related to your well-being.
- They can access your records (except in certain circumstances).
- They can participate in your treatment, like when medical and behavioral health decisions are made and with regard to school issues.
- They can communicate with you, whether by visiting you, talking on the phone, or writing letters.
- All TJJD staff will be professional, courteous, and respectful.
- TJJD will make sure to protect your rights.
- They can participate in your release planning – from the beginning to the end of your TJJD stay.



MOVING THROUGH TJJD

Now that you are at TJJD, you are in the custody of the state of Texas. TJJD is the highest level of placement youth in the Texas juvenile justice system can go. TJJD has high-security and medium-security programs located around Texas. Your TJJD journey will be unique because treatment programs are designed to meet your needs and abilities.

TYPES OF COMMITMENT

There are two types of commitments to TJJD: indeterminate and determinate.

INDETERMINATE COMMITMENTS

If you have an indeterminate commitment, you will stay with TJJD until your 19th birthday unless TJJD decides you should be discharged earlier.

- TJJD will look at your history and assign you a minimum length of stay (MLOS), which is the shortest amount of time you need to stay at TJJD before being eligible for parole.
- Your MLOS is based on the severity of your offense and risk your history poses to the community.
- Finishing your MLOS does not automatically mean you go home. TJJD will look at your needs, risks, and progress when determining if you will be released when that minimum length of stay is up. If you don't focus on your treatment or you hurt or threaten people, TJJD assumes you are not ready to leave.
- Your MLOS could be extended. This extension can only be done by the Release Review Panel and can be due to your behavior or lack of progress in treatment, including specialized treatment.
- If you do really well, you might be able to get your MLOS reduced. Doing really well means you participate in treatment, have safe and cooperative behavior, and don't hurt, try to hurt, or threaten others.

DETERMINE SENTENCE COMMITMENTS

In some cases, very serious offenses result in a sentence set by the court. The longest sentence can be 40 years. If you have a determinate sentence, the court probably sent you to TJJD because the court believes you can improve with treatment and wanted to give you a chance to avoid adult prison.

State law sets a minimum period of time you must stay at a facility before being eligible to be released on TJJD parole. This minimum period of confinement (MPC) is:

- 10 years for capital murder.
- 3 years for a first-degree felony or aggravated controlled substance felony.
- 2 years for a second-degree felony.
- 1 year for a third-degree felony.

Here are some other things you should know about your time at TJJD:

- It is important that you be successful with your treatment so that, when it's time, you can be allowed to go on parole instead of going to adult prison.
- If you complete your entire sentence while at TJJD, you will be discharged.

- If you don't complete your sentence but do complete your MPC before turning 19, TJJD can release you on parole without going back to court.
- If you don't complete your sentence or your MPC, a judge will decide whether to order parole or prison by considering your committing offense and your behavior and progress in treatment while at TJJD.
- Regardless of if you complete your MPC, a judge may send you to prison after a hearing requested by TJJD. TJJD's decision to request this hearing is based on you hurting, trying to hurt, or threatening others or on your refusal to participate in treatment.

There are staff at TJJD who work with youth with determinate sentences. Staff in this unit assist with cases and make important decisions. If you have a determinate sentence, staff at this unit may also answer questions you or your family may have.

FACILITIES

TJJD has high-security and medium-security facilities. You will be assigned to one of these after orientation.

HIGH-SECURITY FACILITIES

These buildings are surrounded by fences. At these facilities, you can:

- meet your treatment needs;
- get counseling and group sessions;
- go to school and get your high school diploma or Certificate of High School Equivalency;
- take part in groups that teach you about needed skills;
- learn vocational skills or other things to help with future job opportunities; and
- earn privileges when you succeed.

MEDIUM-SECURITY FACILITIES

These are reentry centers and other buildings where you live. They are typically not surrounded by fences. At these facilities, you can:

- work on treatment needs and continue with school;
- earn privileges when you succeed;
- meet with a case manager to help plan for going home; and
- show you are responsible before going home.

TJJD REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Once at TJJD, you must work to progress through the rehabilitation program. That means going to school, participating in treatment, using skills learned, and working toward going home. These stages help you:

- learn about your *protective and risk factors* and how they relate to your success when you go home;
- understand how your offense relates to those risk factors (vulnerabilities), like your attitudes, values, and beliefs;
- develop a community re-entry plan – a plan to use when you go home to help you be more skillful and live a life worth living; and
- work with your family in treatment.

To move from one stage to the next, you must also do well on your Integrated Treatment Plan goals, participate in group and school, and apply what you learn in your daily life. Your Youth Service Team (YST) will help you with what you need to do.

Remember, your treatment program will not look the same as anyone else's. Based on your protective and risk factors (vulnerabilities), you and your Youth Service Team will develop a treatment plan with you.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS | RISK FACTORS

Everyone has both protective and risk factors (vulnerabilities). While at TJJD, your goal should be to increase your protective factors and reduce your risk factors.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS are things in your life that will help you succeed, such as:

- the ability to communicate with adults;
- keeping positive adults in your life;
- future focused thinking (having a life worth living); and
- commitment/motivation to achieve goals.

RISK FACTORS (vulnerabilities) are things in your life that contribute to negative thoughts and behaviors, such as:

- lacking skills to communicate;
- being easily influenced by negative people;
- being unable to manage emotions;
- and using drugs or alcohol.

TJJD PROGRAMS | GROUPS

Every TJJD facility will have programs to help you. They will help you figure out why you engaged in certain behaviors that led you to TJJD and help you develop and use new skills to use when you go home.

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY SKILLS GROUPS

These are groups that will support you as you learn new skills and ways to have positive relationships. You will work with your Youth Services Team to learn these skills. Skills groups will be at least two times a week. You'll learn:

- how to regulate emotions and tolerate distress;
- how to be in the moment, or be mindful;
- how to talk to people in a positive way;
- how to solve problems;
- how to build personal relationships with proper boundaries; and
- how to make smart choices.

SPECIALIZED TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Depending on your offense and offense history, you may need to participate in specialized treatment programs, led by trained or licensed staff. Reasons you might need one of these programs are:

- if you came to TJJD for a capital or serious violent offense
- if you have an alcohol or drug concern
- if you need support with mental health;
- if your offense or behavior is sexual in nature; or
- if you exhibit inappropriate sexual behavior while in TJJD.

LEISURE TIME SKILLS BUILDING GROUPS

These are fun groups where you will learn about things that interest you and do them in your free time. You must be on program and demonstrating skillful behavior to participate in these groups. If you have ideas about other fun groups, talk to your YST and JCO staff. Examples of these activities are:

- guitar lessons;
- money management;
- yoga;
- painting;
- sculpting; and
- talent shows.

YOUTH SERVICE TEAM MEETING (YST)

Every month, this group will meet with you to talk about your treatment program and progress.

- The group consists of your case manager, mental health professional, team leader, JCO staff, education staff, specialized treatment providers, and other supportive roles.
- Your parents will be invited to attend these meetings.
- YST reviews your progress with you and creates a plan to keep you moving forward.
- YST may change goals on your Integrated Treatment Plan and determine the stage you are as well as what target behavior needs to be focused on.
- While attending this meeting, it's important to make your voice heard; if you need help, your YST can assist.

COMPLETING THE TJJD PROGRAM

To be eligible for release on parole without being reviewed by the Release Review Panel (*if you are not a youth with a determinate sentence commitment*), you must:

- Finish your minimum length of stay
- Complete your treatment program (DBT Skills group are included in this)
- Reach Stage Complete. There are possible options for you to go home without getting to Stage Complete, but it is much easier to get released with it. To reach Stage Complete:
 - you must be participating in school and work programs;
 - you must be participating in the treatment program; and
 - you must be able to show (*with your behavior*) DBT skills you have learned.
- Complete a community re-entry plan. It should show:
 - you understand your risk and protective factors;
 - how you will reduce your risk factors and increase your protective factors;
 - how you will apply the skills that you have learned in your daily life outside of TJJD;
 - your future plans and how you are going to achieve them;
 - what supports you have to assist you in continuing your progress beyond TJJD; and
 - that you know what will get in the way of your success and plan to manage those situations.
- Participate in all helpful programs, like:
 - reading improvement;
 - positive behavioral supports system (explained later); and
 - gang intervention (if required by the court).

RELEASE FROM TJJD (INDETERMINATE COMMITMENTS)

BEING RELEASED means you will leave a facility but you will still be under supervision (or parole). You could be released to a **Reentry Center** instead of going home, but it depends on your needs. Some things you should know about being released:

- you must have completed your assigned minimum length of stay;
- you must have completed all stages of the rehabilitation program;
- you must have completed or sufficiently participated in assigned specialized treatment; and
- you must have maintained good behavior.

The principal at your facility will review information about you, especially your behavior and how you use Positive Behavioral Supports System (PBSS) skills. The YST confirms you have completed the stages, but this assessment is reviewed by a financial decision authority, who ensures the assessed stage is consistent with your behavior and demonstrated skills. Ultimately, if your parole is not approved because staff believes you aren't ready to move on, your case will be reviewed by the TJJD Release Review Panel.

RELEASE REVIEW PANEL

If you have not met all the criteria for release by the time you have completed your MLOS, you will be reviewed by the Release Review Panel. The function of the Release Review Panel (RRP) is to review a youth who has completed their minimum length of stay (MLOS), but has not yet met program completion criteria. The RRP will determine if you should be:

- extended in TJJD custody for an additional period of time;
- discharged from TJJD; or
- released under parole supervision.

If the RRP decides to grant you parole, your treatment team will decide if you go home or to a reentry center or other placement.

Information used by the Release Review Panel

All information about you, including behavior incident reports and hearings, progress in assigned treatment programs, YST notes and summaries, your Integrated Treatment Plan, school goals and progress, and any other information the RRP determines to be relevant in making a decision.

You, your family, victims, or any supportive person you choose may send written information for the RRP to review.

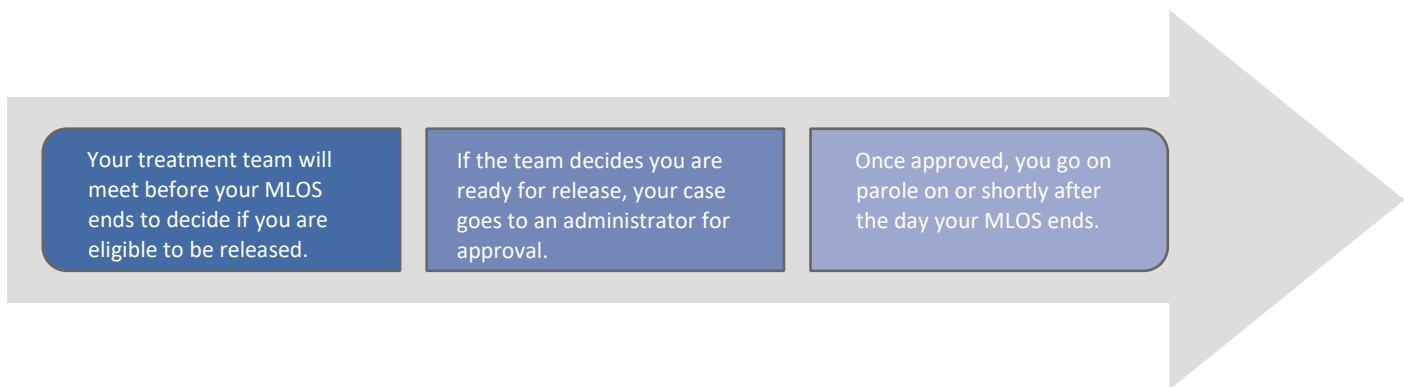
Your family, victims, or any supportive person may ask (in writing) for a meeting with the RRP.

The RRP may interview you or anyone else about your treatment. You don't have to speak to the RRP if you don't want to.

RECONSIDERATION OF RELEASE REVIEW PANEL DECISION

If you disagree with the decision of the Release Review Panel and believe they don't know everything about you, you can ask them to look again. This is called a *request for reconsideration*. Here is what you should know:

- Many people can make a request for you, including you, your parent(s) or guardian(s), advocates, victims, TJJD employees, employees of TJJD contractors, or TJJD volunteers.
- Once you are told about the panel's decision, you will have a limited time to make a written request for reconsideration. If you need help, you ask your case manager or another staff member.
- There may be times when the person in charge of your facility makes a request. This happens if there is new information the panel didn't know or if you commit a major rule violation after the panel's decision.
- Remember – you should remain on your best behavior during this entire process. Once it is decided you will be released, you will transition to parole.



PAROLE

While on parole, you will meet with a parole officer and be expected to participate in structured activity. While you are no longer in a facility, you are still required to comply with laws and rules in order to remain out of a facility.

- You will be assigned a parole officer. Your parole officer is available to help you access positive community activities, connect you with resources, and support your success.
- Your parole officer will maintain regular contact with you, your parent or guardian, and other positive supports in your life.
- Every youth on parole will wear an electronic monitor (EM) for at least the first 30 days. If you experience challenges adjusting after your release, the monitoring period may be extended.
- You are expected to complete community service hours, participate in aftercare services, attend school, and seek employment or other productive activities in the community.
- Your success on parole will be determined by your choices, your behavior, and how you adjust to being back home and in the community.
- Failure to follow the conditions of your parole or committing a new offense may result in your parole being revoked and you being returned to a TJJD facility.

DISCHARGE

Being discharged from TJJD means you have completed the program, from beginning to end, and are ready to be on your own. Remember - you have a chance at a great future! Success comes from things like:

- finishing school, if you didn't at TJJD;
- working toward the job or career you want and making plans for it;
- following through on plans talked about at TJJD; and
- using what you learned in treatment, like how to control your emotions.

Just because you are discharged, that does not mean TJJD is no longer there for you. If you want to continue school, TJJD staff can help you fill out applications, including helping you apply for financial aid if you need it. Be sure to ask your parole officer, caseworker, or reentry specialist about available school and career opportunities.

CONTACT WITH FAMILY

Texas law says TJJD may not tell most people you are here. You and your family though, are welcome to tell anyone you want. Remember:

- You being at TJJD is confidential.
- People will only be able to find out where you are from you or your parents.
- Make sure to give your family your current address.
- If your parents move, make sure you tell your case manager.

PHONE USE

- You must have staff permission to make calls, and they can only be made when you are not in a structured activity.
- The exception – if you need to call the TJJD abuse hotline, you can make these calls without staff permission as long as there is not a scheduled activity. If you need to make a call to the hotline, staff may ask you to wait until the activity is over.
- Staff will only allow you to call people that are on your approved list.
- You are encouraged to make calls to your family to keep them involved in your treatment.
- In emergencies, staff will help you contact your family.
- Phone calls (except calls with your lawyer) can be recorded and listened to.
- If you don't follow phone rules, all of your privileges can be taken away.

VISITATION

- Spending time with your family is important to your success.
- Visits are usually on weekends, but they may be planned for weekdays based on the situation.
- Virtual visits may be arranged at the facility's discretion for special circumstances.
- Your family can make arrangements to see you if there is an emergency you need to know about.
- TJJD must approve all visitors, and their criminal records will be checked.
- A copy of the visitation rules will be given to your family, and they must complete a visitor application.
- If you would like other supportive people to visit you, they must complete a visitor application. Your case manager or family liaison can send them an application or they can download it from the TJJD website.
- You can receive visits from immediate family members such as parents, step-parents, legal guardians, siblings, step-siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, verified children, or spouses.
- If any rules are broken during a visit, TJJD may remove the person(s) from your visitation list.
- If there is an emergency on campus, TJJD may stop visits until it is safe to resume them.
- Your lawyer and personal pastor may visit you. Ask your case manager about how to add them to your visitation list.
- You do not have to visit with someone if you don't want to.

There are some people who are not allowed to visit you, including:

- former or current TJJD youth, unless they are in your immediate family;
- a parent whose parental rights were terminated;
- anyone who the court said cannot contact you;
- anyone who is a safety or security risk or who may delay your treatment program;
- anyone who is not immediate family, unless approved by the superintendent; and
- anyone with an outstanding warrant.

If your family can't afford to visit you, TJJD partners may be able to help. Your parents should contact your facility for details. Partners can help pay for things like gas, motels, and bus tickets.

MAIL

- You are able to receive mail while at TJJD. There is no limit to how many letters you get.
- TJJD will pay to mail three letters a week; if you want to send more, you will have to buy stamps.
- If you are sending letters to your attorney or the court, TJJD will pay to have those mailed and not count them toward your three per week.
- Outgoing and incoming mail is processed and distributed daily, excluding weekends and holidays. Mail should be distributed within 24 hours and packages within 48 hours of receiving.
- Staff will inspect mail for contraband and may read your mail to determine whether it presents a direct threat to safety and security.
- When mail is censored or rejected, you will be notified of reasons for the action. You may appeal decision through the grievance process.
- You may send “Privileged Mail” without it being inspected. These are letters to attorneys, courts, grievance administrators, and agency release authorities.
- If you are transferred to another facility or released, all first class letters and packages will be forwarded to you if TJJD has your forwarding address. If not, the letter or package will be returned to sender.



If contraband is found in your mail, it will be taken. Whoever sent it could face criminal charges

DAILY LIFE AT TJJD

Living at TJJD will be very structured in order to keep you safe and out of trouble. Most of your time will be spent with your dorm group, except for school, where you will be in class with youth from other dorms. There will be about 12 to 18 youth in your dorm. In most secure facilities, you will have your own room. At reentry centers, you will share a room with a few other youth.

Most dorms will have a case manager's office, a group area, a laundry area, and a place for showers, sinks, and toilets. You are responsible for keeping your personal area clean and common areas tidy. Staff will explain your duties to you when you get to the dorm.

Female and male youth will have equal access to programs and services provided at TJJD.

PERSONAL ITEMS

- TJJD will provide you with all of the basic personal things you need.
- You will be provided with soap, shampoo, toothpaste, a toothbrush, deodorant, shaving products, clean bedding, and sheets.
- You are expected to practice good personal hygiene skills, like regular showers and dental care. A barber or hair stylist will come to your dorm every so often to tend to your hair
- You are allowed to have some personal items like books, religious books, religious articles used in worship (explained later), and pictures.
- If your behavior is good, you can earn privileges to buy other products.
- Staff on the dorm will tell you what you are allowed to have.

DRESS CODE | APPEARANCE

- TJJD provides all of your clothes and shoes. You will get clean underwear and socks every day and clean outer clothing at least three times a week.
- You can wear only clothes and shoes provided by TJJD or purchased through TJJD as an earned privilege.
- You will usually wear khakis, blue pants, or jeans, a colored shirt, and tennis shoes.
- Your clothing must be clean, fit properly, and be appropriate for activities you are doing. Shoes or acceptable footwear must be worn. Underwear must be worn and must be covered by outer clothing.
- Girls must wear bras during non-sleeping hours.
- Hair must be worn in a standard style, neatly cut, clean, and well groomed.
- Boys must be clean-shaven.
- Earrings and other body piercing items are not allowed.
- You may get special clothes for community service events, to play sports, or to work. Staff will tell you more about dress code rules when you arrive at your assigned facility.

TOKEN ECONOMY

While at TJJD, you will learn tools for engaging in skillful behavior. TJJD staff are trained to look for attempts by you to use the skills that you are working on. When they see this, they will reward you with tokens. These tokens can be exchanged for a variety of items and experiences at the token store. The items and experiences that are included are based on feedback from TJJD youth about what types of reinforcement motivate them. These tokens and rewards are in addition to privileges that may be earned.

The process looks like this:



SCHEDULE

- Every TJJD facility has its own schedule that will keep you busy most of the day.
- At secure facilities, your day will last at least 10 hours - from the time you wake up until it's time for bed.
- Schedules are different for weekdays, weekends, and holidays.

FOOD | NUTRITION

- You will be provided with a well-balanced diet while at TJJD.
- You will be given three meals a day, as well as a morning, afternoon, and late-night snack.
- If you want a vegetarian meal, that is your choice.
- If a doctor orders a special diet, that will be provided to you.
- You may have a religious diet if your religion requires it.
- At some point, you may get a survey about the food at your facility – fill it out! It may make a difference in what food is served at facilities.

YOUTH SERVICE TEAM (YST)

Your Youth Service Team is an important group assigned to help you. This group includes your assigned case manager, mental health professional, and team leader. The case manager will be the main TJJD contact with your parents or guardians to keep them informed about you. This group will:

- explain your treatment program, including your required specialized treatment needs;
- help you plan your treatment goals;
- communicate with JCO staff regarding your target behavior, skills focus, and goals to help you make progress;
- encourage your family to be involved in your treatment;
- provide group and individual counseling (mental Health professional and case manager); and
- help you decide the best way to be successful at home.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- Your family should always be a part of your treatment.
- You are encouraged to visit, call, and write letters to your family.
- There may be activities at your facility you and your family can do when they come visit.
- All high-security facilities have a family liaison that will keep your family updated with visitation requirements and family events they can attend.
- Your family will receive a written or verbal report about how you're doing from your case manager at least once every 30 days.
- If your family speaks a language other than English, staff can call the language line to translate.

WORKING ON CAMPUS

Most facilities have programs where you can work and earn money. This will get you ready for working when you leave TJJD. Campus jobs usually pay between \$0.50 and \$2.00 an hour. Having a job is a privilege. If you want one, you must have a good behavior record, participate in school, and work your treatment program.

VOLUNTEERS ON CAMPUS

TJJD is lucky to have thousands of caring volunteers. These volunteers give their time and talent to help you. On your campus, there will be a Community Relations Coordinator who is in charge of mentors and tutors. If you would like one, ask your case manager or the Community Relations Coordinator.

- A mentor will build a friendship with you. They offer encouragement and listen when you share.
- Tutors can help you with reading, homework, or preparing for a GED test.

MEDICAL NEEDS

- During orientation, you'll get a physical, dental exam, mental health assessment, alcohol and other drug tests along with other necessary labs. You may also get any vaccinations (shots) you need, including for hepatitis B, the flu, or the COVID-19 vaccine when you arrive.
- Facilities have medical clinics, called infirmaries, on all campuses. You will get medical care when you are sick. Nurses will be at infirmaries every day and if you need to see a doctor, it may be in-person or through a computer.
- If you have an emergency the campus can't handle, you'll be taken to the emergency room (ER)
- You may have been taking medication before arriving at TJJD or may be prescribed some by a doctor when you get here.
 - If you have to take medication, you'll get it in what's called the pill line, before meals and/or at bedtime.
 - You should always take your medicine.
 - If you have a problem, feel side effects from it, or just don't feel well, tell a nurse.
 - **Never**, for any reason, take someone else's pills - this is dangerous.
 - Tell staff immediately if another youth asks or tells you to give them your medication.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES ON CAMPUS

- TJJD allows you the right to practice your preferred religion. You will be asked about your religion and what you practice when you first arrive at TJJD. You don't have to declare a religion if you don't want to. If you aren't 18, your parents must approve your religious choice.
- Once you have told staff about your religion, dedicated chaplaincy staff at each facility can help you with religious counseling, worship, and learning more about spiritual beliefs. These staff can help protect your religious rights and help you understand what is important to you. You can use a conference request form to request to speak with them.
- You can participate in religious services, ceremonies, and other customs when they are not a threat to safety.
- You are allowed to have a few religious items in your room, like bibles and other recognized religious books, a rosary, and other religious material.
- To keep everyone safe, some religious items are not allowed in your room though, like candles, though you may be able to use these things during a religious service.
- if you ever want to change to a different religion, you should talk with chaplaincy staff. They will help you determine how sincere you are to commit to a new religion and, if you are under 18, will talk with your parents about this.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AT TJJD

Education is one of the few things in this world that can't be taken away from you. At TJJD, your education is taken seriously and you will be provided with opportunities. Use the time here to improve yourself. The more education and certificates you have, the more likely you will be successful when you go home.

Most TJJD youth are four to seven years behind in school, and many have dropped out or given up on their education. For you, this means the better you are able to read, the more likely you will be successful in the future. Here's what you need to know about school at TJJD.

- During orientation, you will take some tests to see how you perform in school. These tests will help to figure out what grade level you are at and whether you should be referred for special education.
- Courses you take will depend on your age, grade, treatment progress, and safety risk.
- While in education programming, you will be provided access to publications and certain media communications.
- Positive Behavioral Supports System (PBSS) is trauma-informed education practice that your teachers will help you with your learning. It helps you to feel supported, welcomed, and ready to learn and will help you handle your feelings better, develop self-control, and better interact with others.
- There will be rules posted in your classroom that will tell you what is expected of you
- PBSS is important when staff decide it is time for you to leave, so you must understand it.
- If you don't speak English, you will still be able to take part in all programs
- You may earn certifications during your stay and can even take college courses when you're ready.

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

A high school diploma is important and will affect your future earnings. People with high school diplomas earn about \$9000 more per year than those who drop out of high school.

- Classes you complete at TJJD will earn you credits toward your graduation.
- TJJD schools are year-round and faster paced (accelerated) learning programs.
- You may earn credit faster than you would at public school because of this fast pace.
- These learning programs help you catch up on credits.

EDUCATIONAL INCENTIVES – ATHLETICS

If you do well in school and treatment, you are able to play sports while at TJJD. Depending on your behavior, you might even be able to play games and participate in sports away from your facility. Both the Giddings and Gainesville facilities are part of the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools (TAPPS) league for football, basketball, and track. Ask your case manager about how you can participate in these activities.

CERTIFICATE OF HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY (CHSE)

You are able to take an equivalency test while at TJJD, which is helpful if you are behind in school. Passing a CHSE test shows you know what you need to finish high school.

- The CHSE tests four areas: math, science, social studies, and language arts.
- You may take classes at TJJD to get your ready for the CHSE.
- Once you get your CHSE, you may either stay in school and earn your high school diploma, take college or vocational classes, or get a certification that interests you.

TJJD'S READING PROGRAM

One difference between TJJD schools and public schools is that all TJJD students will get extra help with reading.

- All TJJD teachers add at least 20 minutes of reading to their classes. This means you will get more than 60 minutes of help with your reading every day.
- You will have to complete reading activities, like:
 - debating topics;
 - learning new vocabulary words; and
 - showing you understand paragraphs by summarizing and explaining reading passages.
- If reading is hard for you, there are special reading programs available. If you are in this program, your teacher will provide extra help to improve your reading. You can leave the reading program once your reading has improved.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

You or your family (depending on your age) can contact education staff at your facility if you are having trouble learning. Here are some things you should know.

- At any time, you or your family can make a request for a special education evaluation with the Special Education Coordinator on your campus. This does not need to be in writing; it can just be a matter of asking a teacher.
- Once your request is turned in, the school must respond within 15 school days, but only if your request is in writing.
- The school must provide a notice in writing on whether you will be evaluated. If you *are* to be evaluated, you or your family must provide written permission.
- An initial evaluation and report must be done within 45 school days after your request is turned in. You will receive a copy of the report, called an Admission, Review, and Dismissal process (ARD).
- There are some websites where you can get more information on special education:
 - Legal Framework for the Child-Centered Special Education Process
 - Partners Resource Network
 - Special Education Information Center
 - Texas First Project
- Talk with your teacher or case manager about any other special education needs

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION COURSES | INDUSTRY CERTIFICATION

While at TJJD, many youth enjoy taking trade school courses. These technical classes give you hands-on learning. Some of these classes can count toward your high school diploma and give you a chance to earn an industry certification. One TJJD graduate, who earned a welding certification, made more than \$80,000 one year in his hometown of Houston. Some classes include:

- welding;
- building cabinets;
- home construction;
- auto mechanics;
- auto paint and body repair;
- working with trees and plants;
- safe food handling; and
- computer programming.

COLLEGE

- TJJD wants you to succeed, even after you are released. There are several opportunities available to you if you want to go to college.
- Anytime you need help, whether it's enrolling in school or seeing what you qualify for, contact educational staff at your facility.
- TJJD offers dual credit college courses at secure facilities. Dual credit - allows you to earn high school and college credit at the same time for the same class.
- Don't let a concern about money stop you from going to college or trade school! There may be money available to you, and TJJD staff can help you apply. Some things you may be able to access include financial aid in the form of grants or loans from the federal government as well as private scholarships.



INDEPENDENT LIVING

- Depending on your situation, you may get to participate in an independent living program before being discharged, to help you when you do go home.
- An independent living program teaches you how to live on your own, especially if you will live by yourself once discharged.



RULES AND CONSEQUENCES

In addition to your basic expectations, there are rules you must follow while at TJJD. While all rules are important, certain violations are more serious than others because they result in more harm to other people. If you break the rules, try to break the rules, or help someone else break the rules, there will be consequences. The consequences will depend on how serious the violation was and what your history of violations is.

RULE VIOLATIONS

- A complete list of TJJD rules and what constitutes a violation of the rules is found in TJJD policies (GAP.380.9503 and GAP.380.9504), which can be provided to you at any time.
- Rule violations are classified as major rule violations and minor rule violations.
- Major rule violations pose a greater risk of harm to other people and include things like assault, fighting, and using or possessing weapons.
- Minor rule violations include behavior that, if left unchecked, can easily escalate to harmful behavior, such as horseplay and being disruptive and disrespectful.
- Any violation of the law is considered a rule violation and can also result in you being charged with a crime. TJJD staff are required to report alleged criminal activity. TJJD has an Office of Inspector General (OIG) with real police officers who investigate crimes and can arrest you. There is Special Prosecution Unit that can prosecute you for these crimes.
- When an allegation of a rule violation is reported, an appropriate staff person, which may or may not be OIG staff, will be assigned to investigate. The investigation must begin within 24 hours of the time of the reported rule violation. The assigned staff will not be the staff who reported or witnessed the incident.

CONSEQUENCES

- TJJD has policies that provide for consequences for rule violations, which are accessible to you at all times. These consequences include loss of privileges, loss of eligibility for release, and being placed in a special unit to address reasons for engaging in behavior that hurts other people.
- TJJD's consequences are fair but firm. The goal to use the least amount of consequences needed to correct misconduct and to ensure safety. When staff are deciding consequences, some questions that are asked include:
 - How serious was the conduct?
 - Has past behavior been good or bad?
 - Is a consequence necessary to address the conduct?
- Regarding consequences:
 - you will never be humiliated or mentally abused;
 - corporal punishment (staff member hitting a youth) is never allowed;
 - purposeless or degrading work is not allowed;
 - only staff can impose discipline – youth may not;
 - you can only be disciplined for your own behavior;

- taking any of the following away as a disciplinary consequence for behavior is not allowed:
 - meals or snacks;
 - sleep;
 - exercise;
 - mail, visitation, or phone calls;
 - legal help;
 - medical and mental health attention and services;
 - educational services; and
 - religious services.
- Examples of consequences:
 - loss of privileges;
 - loss of release or transition eligibility; and
 - placement in a special, structured program designed to address assaultive behavior.

DUE PROCESS HEARINGS

You have the right to due process while at TJJD. This means that there is a fair process where you get to be heard before any consequence is given to you. The amount of process depends on the severity of the possible consequence. Ask staff about these hearings if you have questions and if you need help with anything.

LEVEL I HEARING

A Level I Hearing is the highest level of due process. This hearing is used when TJJD believes you have violated your parole and you need to be returned to a TJJD facility because you can no longer safely remain in the community. .

- You will be represented by a lawyer even if you can't afford one.
- A TJJD lawyer will be the hearing officer (decision-maker).
- Staff must prove that it is more likely than not that a particular violation was committed and you're your parole can and should be revoked.
- Even if the violation is proven, you will have the opportunity to argue that your parole should not be revoked, including arguing that there were extenuating circumstances surrounding your violation.

LEVEL II HEARING

A Level II Hearing is used to impose a major disciplinary consequence or to move an institutional status youth from a medium-restriction facility to a high-restriction facility.

- A TJJD staff member who doesn't directly supervise you and was not involved in the alleged incident will be the hearing manager (decision-maker).
- At the hearing, the staff representative must be prove it is more likely than not that the alleged rule violation was likely committed.

- You may pick a TJJD employee to represent you or TJJD will assign someone.

LEVEL III HEARING

A Level III Hearing is the most informal type of TJJD hearing. It is used for different purposes.

- In high-restriction facilities, a Level III hearing is used to decide if you should be admitted to the Regulation and Safety Unit or kept there longer.
- If you are in a medium-restriction facility or on parole, you will have this type of hearing if you are facing any minor disciplinary action.
- You can speak on your behalf at this type of hearing, but you don't have to.

LEVEL IV HEARING

- This type of hearing is used in medium-security facilities or when you are at home on parole. It is used to decide if you should remain in detention or jail while waiting for a Level I or Level II hearing.

APPEALING HEARING DECISIONS

You have the right to appeal any consequence you receive through a level hearing. This means you can ask that the decision made at the hearing be changed if you do not agree with it. When you appeal, it doesn't automatically mean the consequence will be changed; it just means that someone else will look at it to decide if there should be consequences and if they were fair. You may appeal if you believe:

- you did not commit a rule violation;
- the consequence you received was not fair; or
- there were extenuating circumstances to the violation.



PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR AT TJJD

TJJD considers your safety a top priority. While *everything* will be done to keep you safe, there could be times when someone (staff or youth) makes you feel uncomfortable, especially in a sexual way. TJJD has a **zero-tolerance policy** regarding any type of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct. Here's what you need to know to keep yourself safe.

WHAT IS SEXUAL MISCONDUCT?

In TJJD, sexual misconduct includes any sexual contact, indecent exposure, uncomfortable watching, or sexual harassment, which may be done by another youth or staff. It could be a sudden sexual attack, or you may be tricked into becoming sexually active with someone over a period of time. Sexual misconduct could also include kissing for sexual stimulation between youth, which is a major rule violation in TJJD. Below are some terms you should know.

SEXUAL ABUSE

- Causing contact, including penetration (however slight), between the penis and the vulva or anus; between the mouth and penis, vulva, or anus; or penetration (however slight) of the anal or genital opening of someone else with a hand, finger, object, or other instrument.
- Any other intentional touching, either directly or through clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks of another person.
- Any display by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer of the person's uncovered genitalia, buttocks, or breast in the presence of a youth.

VOYEURISM

- An invasion of your privacy by another person for reasons not related to official duties, such as:
 - someone staring at you in the shower or toilet; or
 - making you expose your buttocks, genitals, or breast; or
 - taking pictures of all or part of your naked body or you while performing bodily functions.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

- Repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal comments, gestures, or actions of a derogatory or offensive sexual nature by one youth directed toward another.
- Repeated verbal comments or gestures of a sexual nature to a youth by a staff member, including demeaning references to gender, sexually suggestive or derogatory comments about body or clothing, or obscene language or gestures.

You may believe you could never be sexually abused, but it can happen to anyone.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT SEXUAL ABUSE

SEXUAL ABUSE MYTHS	SEXUAL ABUSE FACTS
<i>I will never be raped or molested.</i>	Anybody can be raped or molested.
<i>It is easy to identify a rapist or molester.</i>	You never know who they are. They can be male or female.
<i>It is not rape if I don't fight back.</i>	If you are still or pretend to go along with it, this does not mean you allowed it to happen.
<i>The only people raped in facilities are rapists and child molesters.</i>	Rape can happen to anyone. It happens most often to vulnerable groups, such as individuals who are first-time offenders or those with mental health issues.
<i>I've had this happen before and this is normal for me.</i>	Sexual abuse is never okay. Report the abuse! Help prevent yourself and others from being abused.
<i>It is part of the punishment of being locked up.</i>	Being raped while in a facility violates your constitutional rights. It is not punishment for anything you have done in the past.
<i>It was not rape because I felt a sexual response.</i>	Your body is designed to respond to touch. It is normal to have a physical response, arousal, or orgasm during rape or assault. This does not mean you wanted it or liked it.
<i>I am embarrassed and don't want to tell.</i>	Staff are trained to help you and they understand you might be embarrassed. You can call the TJJD Abuse Hotline to report it.
<i>It's probably my fault! I don't want to get in trouble.</i>	Sexual abuse and rape are never your fault! You will not get in trouble.
<i>No one will believe me.</i>	When you report sexual abuse, the law says staff have to report it. Law enforcement officers will be called, who are trained to find evidence to help prove the sexual abuse happened. People will believe you.

Hearing about possible sexual abuse may be uncomfortable, but it is important for you to know what to do if this happens to you. Sexual predators are good at *grooming* – breaking down normal, healthy boundaries so they can take advantage of you. One way to reduce your risk of being sexually abused or assaulted is by having healthy boundaries. Remember:

- Don't ask for or accept favors or gifts that are against the rules.
- Don't have inappropriate conversations with other youth or staff.
- Avoid anyone who says too many nice things about you, along with anyone who tries to get you alone or wants to share improper secrets.
- Report anyone who threatens you.
- Report anyone who seems to be touching you too much. This could mean someone who always hugs you, tries to hold your hand, or someone who seems to always accidentally brush up against you.
- Report anyone who keeps looking at you in a way that makes you feel nervous or uncomfortable.

While in TJJD, you will learn about the Prison Rape Elimination Act, or PREA (*pronounced pree'-uh*). It is a federal law that helps officials prevent, detect, and respond to rape or sexual abuse against people who are in adult or juvenile correctional facilities.

Sexual contact at TJJD between two people is prohibited – period. There is no such thing as an allowable sexual relationship at TJJD.

- NOT BETWEEN YOUTH
- NOT BETWEEN STAFF AND YOUTH

TJJD ABUSE HOTLINE POSTERS are displayed in all dorms at all facilities.



There is a zero-tolerance policy at TJJD regarding sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and voyeurism. Any such violation must be reported to 866-477-8354.

Fortunately, sexual abuse and assault are rare at TJJD, but because they are serious, it's important for you to know what to do if it happens to you or someone else.

WHAT IF I HAVE BEEN SEXUALLY ABUSED?

REPORT IT

- If you have been sexually abused, sexually harassed, or sexually assaulted, report it as soon as you can to the TJJD Abuse Hotline at **866-477- 8354**.
- Tell staff at your facility you trust, even if some time has passed.

PRESERVE EVIDENCE

- If you are sexually assaulted, remember, you must save evidence for law enforcement. After reporting, do not brush your teeth, change clothes, take a shower, or eat or drink.
- TJJD staff will get you to a medical staff to be examined for possible injuries.
- The Office of Inspector General (OIG), or law enforcement, will take steps to collect all available evidence. This may include sending you to the hospital to collect any evidence on your body.

BE SAFE

- Reporting sexual assault or abuse is the fastest way TJJD can put a stop to it.
- Although traumatic, you can heal from sexual abuse with counseling and support.
- Victims of sexual assault who waited to tell often wish they had said something sooner.
- Most abusers don't have just one target - by reporting sexual abuse, you will be keeping others safe.

Remember If you aren't sure if something is sexual abuse, it's better to report it. If your gut tells you something isn't right, it probably isn't!

YOUTH GRIEVANCES AND MORE

There may be things other than sexual abuse that you need to make a complaint about while in TJJD. Remember, you have the right to complain about *anything* you don't feel is right. Here's what you should know.

WHO CAN HELP ME?

You should tell a trusted adult about any problems you are having at TJJD. Any staff member or volunteer can get your complaint to the right person. The following are just some of the people here to help you.

YOUTH RIGHTS SPECIALISTS

TJJD employees in charge of the youth grievance system who make sure your complaints are answered

PREA COMPLIANCE MANAGERS

TJJD employees who are responsible for making sure that you are sexually safe at the facility; if you are a victim of sexual abuse, they can get you the name, address, and phone number of a local rape crisis center

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL'S CRIMINAL INVESTIGATORS

The OIG is a law-enforcement entity inside of TJJD. They investigate criminal acts committed by TJJD staff or youth and can file criminal charges.

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL'S ADMINISTRATIVE INVESTIGATORS

Some OIG employees investigate non-criminal allegations of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or policy violations by staff against youth

OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT OMBUDSMAN (OIO)

This is a separate state agency created to protect youth rights while at TJJD. This office is not part of TJJD. It reports directly to the Office of the Governor. Part of their duties involve talking to youth at facilities to find out about life at TJJD. If you see them at your campus, you can visit with them. If you have concerns about your health or safety, you can contact the OIO at **855-468-7330**.

PARENTS

Remember, your parents can always help you by speaking up on your behalf.

ADVOCACY GROUPS

These groups help with problems you may have. Some of them provide counseling and support to victims of sexual abuse. Others may speak to lawmakers to influence needed changes in the juvenile justice system.

DISABILITY RIGHTS OF TEXAS

This is a legal advocacy group that helps youth with disabilities.

CONFERENCE REQUEST SYSTEM

While living at TJJD, you may address any issues or concerns by requesting a meeting with staff assigned to your dorm. After submitting a request, a meeting will be scheduled. If after the meeting, your problem is not solved, you can file a grievance.

GRIEVANCES

You can write a grievance for any problem you are having. The general process is below.

- Get a grievance form from a grievance clerk or staff and fill it out.
- Tear off the yellow page and keep it (it's your copy). Fold the white page and drop it in the locked grievance box.
- You don't have to explain or show your grievance to anyone before you put it in the box.
- You can get help from anyone you feel comfortable with, whether that's peers or staff, when writing your grievance. You can also help your peers with their grievances.
- TJJD will let you know in writing within about two weeks if the problem can be fixed the way you want or in another way
- If you don't like the answer you get about your grievance, you can ask for someone else to look at it. This is called an appeal.

WHAT IF SOMEONE THREATENS ME ABOUT FILING A GRIEVANCE?

It takes courage to report abuse or wrongdoing, especially if you are embarrassed or afraid. By not reporting, you'll make things worse on yourself.

- If someone is causing you harm because you reported a problem, that is called *retaliation*.
- *Anyone* who retaliates against you, even TJJD staff, will face serious trouble.
- Report retaliation just like you would anything else.

Remember – never lie! Don't make up something to get someone in trouble. TJJD takes every allegation of abuse, neglect, and exploitation seriously - therefore, it is important any report you make of abuse, neglect, and/or exploitation be truthful. Making false reports or lying to investigators are crimes! It is a felony offense to knowingly make an untrue report of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

MY RECORDS

State and federal law make information about you confidential to most people outside TJJD, but the rules can be hard to understand. Here's what you should know.

- TJJD can't release information about you to the public. There are times though, when people who work for the courts, police departments, or other law enforcement can see your record without your permission.
- If you have a sexual offense on your record, you may have to register on a public database.
- When you are discharged from TJJD, you or your family may want to see a lawyer to see what you can do to keep your record as private as possible. Many youth have their records sealed, and a lawyer can help with this.

Below are some frequently asked questions about juvenile records.

WHO HAS A JUVENILE RECORD IN TEXAS?

Those who were taken into custody or charged with delinquent conduct or conduct indicating a need for supervision committed when at least 10 but younger than 17.

WHAT ARE JUVENILE RECORDS?

Records that show you were taken into custody or charged with a juvenile offense and all the related court, probation, and TJJD records about you.

WHO HAS ACCESS TO JUVENILE RECORDS?

Generally, juvenile records are confidential, with some exceptions. The following are examples of entities that may have access to your records:

- the court that sent you to TJJD;
- your attorney;
- anyone you are sent to by TJJD for treatment or services;
- anyone you will live with after release;
- government agencies, if required or authorized by law; and
- anyone with an interest in the work of the court, if approved by the juvenile court.

WHAT IS SEALING AND HOW DO I GET MY RECORD SEALED?

- To have your record sealed, you must submit an application to all juvenile courts that you had a case in, if you meet the criteria to have your record sealed. You may wish to get a lawyer, but you are not required to. The court can grant or deny your request for sealing.
- If your record is sealed, all information about you is removed from DPS's criminal history database, which means law enforcement and the FBI can no longer see it. The court records are removed and it is like you never had a court case.
- Sealed records are not destroyed. They can be re-opened in the future for certain things, such as if you need them or if you are prosecuted as an adult for certain crimes.

WHAT IF THERE ARE ANY VICTIM IN MY CASE?

- TJJD makes sure that victims' legal rights are always protected and will treat them with dignity, fairness, and respect.
- Victims are allowed to send information to TJJD that may be used to help in your treatment.
- Victims will not be provided information about you except as allowed by law.
- TJJD will not give you information about your victims.

CONCLUSION

We know this time away from your family and friends will be hard. Look at this in a different way though. Getting sent to TJJD is a chance for a fresh start! TJJD staff will work with you to help you learn what you need to do at home, at school, and in the community to be successful.

Remember, the power to change is yours! It's up to you to make the decision to participate in treatment and take advantage of what TJJD has to offer. There are so many who are rooting for you – TJJD staff, your parents, friends, and volunteers. Ultimately though, *you have to root for yourself* to be successful.

As you progress through TJJD you will have many choices. You have to decide what you will do with this opportunity! It's about your future and looking ahead to what can be.

Notes

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