

Schedule F:

Agency Workforce Plan

Introduction

The TJJD Agency Workforce Plan is developed in compliance with the Texas Government Code, Section 2056.0021. The statute requires state agencies to conduct a strategic staffing analysis and develop a workforce plan, according to guidelines developed by the State Auditor, to address critical staffing and training needs of the agency. In addition to being included in the Agency Strategic Plan, the Agency Workforce Plan is submitted to the State Auditor's Office State Classification Team as a separate document.

Section I: Agency Overview

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) is the state's standalone juvenile justice agency. TJJD was created effective December 2011 by the 82nd Legislature. At this time, the powers and duties of the former Texas Youth Commission and the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission were transferred to TJJD.

After merging TJJD's predecessors into one entity, the Legislature directed the agency to work in partnership with local county probation departments, governments, courts, law enforcement, and communities to promote public safety by providing a full continuum of effective supports and services to youth from initial contact with the juvenile justice system through termination of supervision. (See Sec. 201.002(1), Texas Human Resources Code.) This task requires TJJD to implement key functions at both the locally driven "front end" of the juvenile justice system and the state-driven "back end" of the system.

At the front end of the system, TJJD partners with local stakeholders to promote delinquency prevention and early intervention programs, support county probation professionals, and develop safe diversion options. Statute requires the agency to prioritize the use of community-based or family-based programs and services for youth over the placement in or commitment of youth to a state-operated secure facility. (See Sec. 201.002(2)(C), Texas Human Resources Code.) TJJD employs program specialists, investigators, and training specialists with job duties that focus on developing delinquency prevention and early intervention programs, monitoring and enforcing established standards for community-based programs and county juvenile justice facilities, and certifying and training certain county-level employees. Agency staff also distribute formula-funded and competitive grants to county probation departments and coordinate statewide regionalization initiatives designed to promote diversion.

At the back end of the system, the vast majority of the TJJD's employees operate the agency's secure facilities and halfway houses. These staff directly supervise youth and provided care for their basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter, safety, medical care, legal rights, visitation, and spiritual needs. Employees also provide specialized rehabilitative programming designed for youth with serious violent offenses, sex offenses, alcohol and other drug abuse or dependency, high-level mental health treatment needs, and intellectual and developmental disabilities. In addition, TJJD operates year-round educational programs within each of its secure facilities and partners with local school districts to provide these services in halfway houses. Finally, state staff also perform job duties related to the agency's reentry system and parole programs for youth who have been released from a facility.

Notably, while TJJD's functions at the front and back ends of the system have remained steady over time, youth treatment needs and risk profiles have intensified. For example, between fiscal years 2013 and 2023, the number of youth admitted to TJJD's custody fell by about 30%; during the same timeframe, however, the number of admitted youth with moderate or high mental health treatment needs increased by 130%. Similarly, the criminogenic risk profile of youth in the juvenile justice system has increased. Between fiscal years 2019 and

2023, system referrals for homicide more than doubled. As discussed throughout the report, youths' growing needs and risks, coupled with staffing challenges, create operational challenges across the state's juvenile justice system that TJJD is tasked with managing.

Mission

Transforming young lives and creating safer communities.

Vision

To be a team of difference-makers working together to transform lives.

Core Values

- **Teamliness:** Working together with trust, shared purpose, and selfless commitment to achieve our mission.
- **Integrity:** Prioritizing honesty and courage over ego and perfectionism.
- **Excellence:** Showing up each day with energy and pride so we can be our best and make a difference together.
- **Growth:** Stretching our systems, skills, and selves so we can move forward collectively.

Foundational Pillars

- **Safety: Our number one priority is public safety.** Providing a safe environment for our staff and youth is necessary for us to implement the most effective evidence-based programming in the most appropriate setting.
- **Accountability:** We are a system rooted in accountability for our youth and staff, where everyone is held responsible for their actions and outcomes. We believe the behavior we desire to see in others should first be seen through our own actions.
- **Transparency:** We maintain trust and transparency with all stakeholders through direct, honest, accurate, and proactive communication. We do not shy away from difficult conversations.

Organizational Structure

TJJD is governed by a nine-member Board appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Texas Senate.

The **Executive Director** is the administrative head of the agency and is selected by and reports to the TJJD Board. The Chief Inspector General and the Chief Auditor also report directly to the TJJD Board.

The **Chief Inspector General** oversees the Office of Inspector General (OIG), which is responsible for the investigating allegations of criminal and administrative misconduct against youth, staff, and other relevant individuals at state, county, and private contract facilities, including incidents involving abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Additionally, OIG performs location and apprehension efforts of TJJD youth who have escaped, absconded, or violated a condition of their release from TJJD; secure gatehouse operations including contraband prevention, detection, and interception within TJJD facilities; investigations analytics and research; operation of the 24-hour Incident Reporting Center; and use-of-force monitoring.

The **Chief Auditor** oversees the TJJD Internal Audit Department, which is responsible for evaluating and assessing agency services, operations, and processes; providing consultation to agency management regarding design and implementation of internal controls; and coordinating external audit activities.

The **Office of the Independent Ombudsman (OIO)** is a state agency established to investigate, evaluate, and secure the rights of post-adjudicated youth who are confined in a county, state, or contract care facility or who are released on parole. The Chief Ombudsman is appointed by and reports to the Governor, not to TJJD Executive Management or the TJJD Board. OIO's responsibilities include:

- Reviewing complaints, other than those alleging criminal behavior, filed with the OIO and investigating each complaint in which it appears that a youth may be in need of assistance;
- Providing assistance to certain post-adjudicated youth whom the OIO determines are in need of assistance, including advocating with an agency, provider, or other person in the best interests of the youth;
- Inspecting facilities and procedures of the facilities where post-adjudicated youth have been placed to ensure that their rights are fully observed;
- Reviewing the procedures established by TJJD and evaluating the delivery of services to youth to ensure that the rights of those youth are fully observed;
- Reviewing reports related to complaints regarding juvenile probation programs, services, or facilities, and analyzing the data contained in the reports to identify trends in complaints; and
- Reporting a possible standards violation by a local juvenile probation department to the appropriate division within TJJD.

The following staff report directly to TJJD's **Executive Director**:

- The **Deputy Executive Director (DED)** directly assists the Executive Director in leading and managing the operations of the agency. The DED oversees the operations of the secure correctional facilities, education, the juvenile justice training academy, the monitoring and inspections division, and youth movement.
- The **Deputy Executive Director for Probation, Reentry, and Integrated Treatment** oversees the agency's integrated treatment, parole/re-entry, probation, medical services and research divisions. This role directly manages the departments and program areas responsible for overseeing certain grant programs designed to support county partners; developing and implementing the statewide Regionalization Plan; promoting prevention and early intervention services to at-risk youth; monitoring performance accountability of Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs; administering and monitoring Federal Title IV-E Foster Care Program contracts for the agency and participating juvenile probation departments; overseeing the agency's Office of Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) who ensure compliance with ICJ laws and rules relating to juveniles traveling or relocating across state lines; and providing a continuum of care and supervision for TJJD youth housed in halfway houses or released to parole. The Deputy is responsible for ensuring clinical and medical interventions are occurring throughout the continuum. Parole and re-entry divisions ensure community safety through successful community re-entry, supervision and monitoring.
- The **Deputy Executive Director for Finance and Operations** is responsible for leading the agency's fiscal and business affairs and overseeing the departments responsible for administrative support of the agency, including Finance, Business Operations, Information Technology, and Human Resources.
- The **General Counsel** oversees the Office of General Counsel (OGC), which provides in-house legal services. Such services include providing legal counsel to the TJJD Board and agency management, including assisting with proposed rules, policies, practices, and legislation; overseeing the publication of rules and policies; managing the youth grievance system; managing the functions of the Release Review Panel, which makes

decisions regarding release to parole, discharge from TJJD, or extensions in lengths of stay for certain committed youth; conducting administrative due process hearings for youth and employees; maintaining youth records; and overseeing any litigation involving the agency.

- The **Director of Structured Programming and Accountability** works with agency and facility leadership to define, describe, and implement elements of the Texas Model – TJJD’s foundational model for improving youth behavior so they may return home safely. The Director provides research support for decision making as needed, clinical manuals, program descriptions, and training for administrators and front-line staff in practices and principles related to the model.
- The **Sr. Director of Accreditation and Readiness** serves as the agency’s executive lead for overseeing, directing, and coordinating the American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation process for TJJD’s secure facilities and leading the operational activation of two newly constructed secure facilities. All secure facilities and two new builds will be ACA accredited by August 2030. The Senior Director of Accreditation and Facility Readiness also leads with any disaster and emergency planning and evacuations.
- The **Chief of Staff** provides direction and guidance to the Executive Director and executive management on strategic operations and planning, the establishment of functional and organizational relationships to achieve and advance the agency’s goals and objectives, and executive-level projects related to the oversight of agency operations. The COS oversees TJJD’s policy, external relations, research, and communications functions.

Critical Functions

TJJD’s organizational structure enables the agency to build and oversee a unified juvenile justice system for the State of Texas. TJJD’s functions include collaborating with and supporting local juvenile probation departments in the development of a consistent county-based continuum of services; increasing reliance on alternatives to placement and TJJD commitment; overseeing regional cooperation; facilitating interagency coordination among juvenile probation departments; providing ongoing training and technical assistance; monitoring juvenile detention and post-adjudication facilities; and ensuring performance accountability for juvenile justice alternative education programs. In addition, TJJD operates its own juvenile justice facilities in which staff emphasize a highly structured residential model; individualized intervention based on community risk; and a culture of safety, accountability, and transparency.

Support the development of a consistent county-based continuum of effective interventions, supports, and services to increase the reliance on alternatives to placement and state commitment.

- Provide Discretionary State Aid (DSA) funding to support more research- and evidence-based practices that have well-defined recidivism reduction goals and outcomes.
- Assist local departments in the development and implementation of community-based programs and services through technical assistance and data analysis.
- Provide funding and guidance for the enhancement and expansion of community-based services.
- Enhance and utilize partnerships with other statewide youth-serving agencies to keep youth as shallow as appropriate in the juvenile justice system.
- Continue investment in regional diversion alternatives to further reduce commitments to TJJD where safe and appropriate.

Encourage regional cooperation that enhances county collaboration.

- Provide grant opportunities that incentivize regional collaboration and positive outcomes to ensure community safety and minimize waste of taxpayer funds.

- Maintain and expand comprehensive integrated juvenile case management systems that detail juvenile referrals, offenses, placement, programming, and supervision; and that allow for information sharing and standardized case management across the system.
- Facilitate interagency coordination and collaboration among juvenile probation departments, school districts, and the Texas Education Agency.

Enhance continuity of care throughout the juvenile justice system.

- Provide continual training and technical assistance to promote compliance with established standards and assist local authorities in improving the operation of probation services.
- Monitor operations of juvenile detention and post-adjudication facilities.
- Monitor performance accountability for juvenile justice alternative education programs.
- Ensure the appropriate levels of communication and staff support to improve the outcomes of youth who are referred to the juvenile justice system.
- Certify certain county-level employees and monitor professional responsibilities related to certification.
- Prioritize successful youth reentry through permanency planning beginning from the time of commitment, and collaborative and timely case planning as youth move through the system.

Operate secure facilities safely and effectively.

- Monitor the implementation of the Texas Model to ensure high fidelity to the residential model, a common vernacular for staff and youth to use, and functional analysis within behavior chains to inform decision making.
- Provide each youth with high-quality and individualized intervention in a residential model of service delivery aimed at generalizing skills to various areas, including treatment, education, vocations, and family involvement, with high standards of accountability for the youth.
- Maintain a culture of safety, accountability, and transparency within TJJD facilities to promote a positive and structured atmosphere that ensures staff and youth safety, empowers staff in their work, and upholds facility security.
- Prepare youth within state-operated facilities for effective reentry into their schools and communities through a comprehensive education program encompassing reading skills, GED preparation, vocational skill building, and advanced training, with specialized support for students with learning difficulties or special education needs. Facilitate smooth transitions by addressing employability skills and reentry preparations before students leave secure facilities.
- Develop community reentry plans with input from multiple stakeholders to ensure successful transitions back to the community.
- Emphasize prevention, training enhancements, and corrective actions based on incident reviews to uphold safety standards. Agency Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Agency Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

GOAL A: Community Juvenile Justice

OBJECTIVE A.1: Grants for Community Juvenile Justice Services

Outcome Measures:

- 1.1.1 Rate of Successful Completion of Deferred Prosecution (Key)
- 1.1.2 Rate of Successful Completion of Court-ordered Probation (Key)
- 1.1.3 Re-Referral Rate (Key)
- 1.1.4 Adjudication Rate
- 1.1.5 Referral Rate/Juveniles Served by Prevention and Intervention Programs
- 1.1.6 Number of Absconders From Basic Supervision
- 1.1.7 Completion of Prevention and Intervention Programs

STRATEGY A.1.1: Prevention and Intervention

Output Measure:

- 1.1.1.1 Number of Juveniles Served by Prevention/Intervention

STRATEGY A.1.2: Basic Probation Services

Efficiency Measure:

- 1.1.2.1 Cost Per Day for Basic Supervision
- 1.1.2.2 Cost Per Formal Referral (Key)

Explanatory Measures:

- 1.1.2.1 Total Number of Delinquent Referrals
- 1.1.2.2 Total Number of Formal Referrals (Key)
- 1.1.2.3 Total Number of Felony Referrals
- 1.1.2.4 Total Number of Crisis Intervention Referrals

Output Measures:

- 1.1.2.1 ADP: Juveniles Supervised under Conditional Release
- 1.1.2.2 ADP: Juveniles Supervised under Deferred Prosecution
- 1.1.2.3 ADP: Juveniles Supervised under Adjudicated Probation
- 1.1.2.4 Average Daily Population of Juveniles in Basic Supervision

STRATEGY A.1.3: Community Programs

Efficiency Measures:

- 1.1.3.1 Cost Per Day/Community Non-residential Program

Output Measures:

- 1.1.3.1 Juveniles Served-Community Non-Res Programs

STRATEGY A.1.4: Pre and Post Adjudication Facilities

Efficiency Measure:

- 1.1.4.1 Cost Per Day Per Youth for Residential Placement

Output Measure:

- 1.1.4.1 Average Daily Population of Residential Placements

STRATEGY A.1.5: Commitment Diversion Initiatives

Efficiency Measure:

- 1.1.5.1 Cost Per Day: Commitment Diversion (Key)

Output Measure:

- 1.1.5.1 ADP: Commitment Diversion Initiatives (Key)

STRATEGY A.1.6: Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Programs

Output Measures:

- 1.1.6.1 Number of Mandatory Students Entering JJAEPs (Key)
- 1.1.6.2 Mandatory Student Attendance Days in JJAEP During the Reg School Year (Key)

STRATEGY A.1.7: Mental Health Services Grant

STRATEGY A.1.8: Regional Diversion Alternatives

Output Measures:

- 1.1.8.1 Number of Regional Diversion Placements (Key)
- 1.1.8.2 Average Daily Population: Regional Diversion Placements

STRATEGY A.1.9: Probation System Support

GOAL B: State Services and Facilities

OBJECTIVE B.1: STATE-OPERATED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Outcome Measures:

- 2.1.1 Total Number of New Admissions to JJD (Key)
- 2.1.2 Diploma or High School Equivalency Rate (JJD-operated Schools) (Key)
- 2.1.3 Percent Improved Reading Grade Level at Release (Key)
- 2.1.4 Turnover Rate of Juvenile Correctional Officers (Key)
- 2.1.5 Industrial Certification Rate in JJD-operated Schools
- 2.1.6 Rearrest/Re-referral Rate (Key)
- 2.1.7 One-year Rearrest/Re-referral Rate for Violent Felony Offenses (Key)
- 2.1.8 One-year Rearrest/Re-referral Rate for Offenses as or More Severe than Committing Offense (Key)
- 2.1.9 Reincarceration Rate: Within One Year (Key)
- 2.1.10 Reincarceration Rate: Within Three Years (Key)
- 2.1.11 Percent Improved Math Grade Level at Release (Key)

STRATEGY B.1.1: Assessment, Orientation, and Placement

Efficiency Measure:

- 2.1.1.1 Assessment and Orientation Cost Per Juvenile Day

Explanatory Measure:

- 2.1.1.1 Total Residential Intakes

Output Measure:

- 2.1.1.1 Average Daily Population: Assessment and Orientation (Key)

STRATEGY B.1.2: Facility Operations and Overhead

STRATEGY B.1.3: Facility Supervision and Food Service

Efficiency Measure:

- 2.1.3.1 CPD: State-Operated Secure Correctional Facility

Explanatory Measure:

- 2.1.3.1 Juveniles Under JCO Direct Supervision Per Shift (Key)

Output Measure:

- 2.1.3.1 Average Daily Population: State Operated Secure Correctional Facilities (Key)

STRATEGY B.1.4: Education

Efficiency Measure:

- 2.1.4.1 Education and Workforce Cost in JJD Operated Schools

Explanatory Measure:

- 2.1.4.1 Percent Reading at Grade Level at Commitment

Output Measures:

- 2.1.4.1 Average Daily Attendance in JJD-operated Schools (Key)
- 2.1.4.2 Number of Industrial Certifications Earned by Juveniles

STRATEGY B.1.5: Alternatives to State Secure Placement

Efficiency Measure:

- 2.1.5.1 Halfway House Cost Per Juvenile Day
- 2.1.5.2 Capacity Cost in Contract Programs Per Juvenile Day

Output Measure:

- 2.1.5.1 Average Daily Population: Halfway House Programs (Key)
- 2.1.5.2 Average Daily Population: Contract Programs (Key)

STRATEGY B.1.6: Health Care

Efficiency Measure:

- 2.1.6.1 Cost of Health Care Services Per Juvenile Day
- 2.1.6.2 Cost of Psychiatric Services Per Juvenile Day

Output Measure:

- 2.1.6.1 Average Daily Population: Health Care
- 2.1.6.2 Average Daily Population: Psychiatric Services

STRATEGY B.1.7: Integrated Behavior Management

Efficiency Measures:

- 2.1.7.1 General Rehabilitation Treatment Cost Per Juvenile Day
- 2.1.7.2 Specialized Treatment Cost Per Juvenile Day

Output Measures:

- 2.1.7.1 Average Daily Population: General Rehabilitation Treatment (Key)
- 2.1.7.2 Average Daily Population: Specialized Treatment (Key)

STRATEGY B.1.8: Residential System Support

OBJECTIVE B.3: MAINTAIN STATE FACILITIES

STRATEGY B.3.1: Construct and Renovate Facilities

Efficiency Measure:

- 2.3.1.1 Change Orders and Add-ons as a % of Budgeted Project Const. Costs

GOAL C: Parole Services

OBJECTIVE C.1: PAROLE SERVICES

Outcome Measures:

- 3.1.1 Constructive Activity

STRATEGY C.1.1.: Parole Direct Supervision and Reentry Services

Efficiency Measure:

- 3.1.1.1 Parole Supervision Cost Per Juvenile Day

Output Measures:

- 3.1.1.1 Average Daily Population: Parole (Key)
- 3.1.1.2 Average Daily Population: Contract Parole
- 3.1.1.3 Average Daily Population: Aftercare Services

GOAL D: Office of the Independent Ombudsman

OBJECTIVE D.1: OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT OMBUDSMAN

STRATEGY D.1.1: Office of the Independent Ombudsman

Output Measure:

- 4.1.1.1 Number of Juvenile Directly Served through the Office of Independent Ombudsman

GOAL E: Juvenile Justice System

OBJECTIVE E.1: JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

STRATEGY E.1.1: Training and Certification

Output Measure:

- 5.1.1.1 Number of Officers Certified

STRATEGY E.1.2: Monitoring and Inspections

Output Measures:

- 5.1.2.1 Number of Local Facility Inspections Conducted
- 5.1.2.2 Number of Annual Comprehensive Monitoring Reviews
- 5.1.2.3 Number of On-site Consultations Conducted in Connection with Risk-based Monitoring Activities

STRATEGY E.1.3: Interstate Agreement

Output Measure:

- 5.1.3.1 Juveniles Served through Interstate Compact

GOAL F: Indirect Administration

OBJECTIVE F.1: PROVIDE ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT

STRATEGY F.1.1: Central Administration

STRATEGY F.1.2: Information Resources

GOAL G: Office of the Inspector General

OBJECTIVE G.1: CONDUCT OVERSIGHT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE SERVICES AND FACILITIES

STRATEGY G.1.1: Office of the Inspector General

Explanatory Measures:

- 7.1.1.1 Number of Allegations Reported to the Office of the Inspector General (Key)
- 7.1.1.2 Number of JJD Juveniles Apprehended by OIG (Key)

Output Measures:

- 7.1.1.1 Number of Completed Criminal Investigative Cases (Key)
- 7.1.1.2 Number of Completed OIG County Investigation Unit ANE Cases (Key)
- 7.1.1.3 Number of Completed OIG State Investigation Unit ANE and Admin Cases (Key)

Anticipated Changes – Mission, Strategies, and Goals

The agency does not anticipate significant changes to TJJD’s mission and core values. **Public safety will continue to be the agency’s number one priority.** Agency workforce initiatives could be affected by significant changes to the population of youth within state secure facilities. Further utilization of alternatives to placement will continue to serve youth adjudicated to the county level of the juvenile justice system, which constitutes the vast majority of justice-involved youth in the state. However, at present, there are no viable alternatives to commitment for most of the youth sent to TJJD’s custody, as made evident by the collapse of secure contract placement options for this population. The average daily population of TJJD youth supervised in a contract placement dropped from about 100 in FY 2020 to only six in FY 2026.

During the 89th Legislative Session, members approved a 15% salary increase for TJJD’s Juvenile Corrections Officers (JCO), bringing Texas more in-line with national peers. Since then, the agency has worked to compliment that investment by bolstering the training academy, implementing leadership training, adjusting daily programming schedules to maximize effectiveness, and providing direction, expertise, and resources to staff, including training clinical skills to an appropriate level for all staff members.

In early 2025, the agency implemented an enterprise-level initiative to refine and sustainably integrate the Texas Model, which was initiated in 2019. The original Texas Model was a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the juvenile justice system through evidence-based principles, focusing on equipping staff with tools for a youth’s safe and successful return to the community. In its first iteration, the Texas Model prioritized physical and psychological safety, establishing a paradigm of trauma-responsive interventions to problematic or unsafe behaviors, and implementing structured de-escalation techniques.

Now, with the latest iteration of the Texas Model, TJJD is refining its approach while maintaining its focus on safety. This newest phase of the model emphasizes a structured, safe environment and enhances skill development for staff and youth. The agency's foundational pillars of safety, accountability, and transparency drive this model, promoting a unified juvenile justice system where staff use a team approach to achieve positive outcomes for youth and Texas communities.

Key components of Texas Model 2.0 include:

- Collaborative partnerships with county probation departments;
- A highly structured residential environment targeting individual risk factors;
- High-quality services delivered by well-trained staff;
- A cohesive framework of evidence-based practices founded upon Dialectical Behavior Therapy principles; and
- A culture of safety, accountability, and transparency within TJJD facilities.

This model represents a transformative shift, empowering juvenile justice practitioners and promoting safer communities. Under the Texas Model, the agency is implementing several initiatives within state facilities to enhance service delivery through a residential framework, where the impacts of specialized treatment services (which are provided to all youth committed to TJJD) are augmented by the maintenance of a structured, therapeutic milieu. This is achieved by ensuring all staff members have appropriate expertise and fidelity to basic behavior management and change principles. To succeed in TJJD's care and beyond, youth must receive reinforcement when they demonstrate safe and skillful behavior throughout their entire facility environment (e.g., the classroom, during recreation, receiving negative news during a phone call on the dorm, etc.), not just in the context of a group or individually specialized treatment setting. Similarly, they must be held consistently and appropriately accountable for unsafe or unskillful behavior.

These initiatives are key to TJJD maintaining safe and highly structured facilities in the context of a youth population demonstrating higher criminogenic risk and treatment needs than ever before. The five functions of the residential model that will shape agency actions and staff roles are:

1. Enhancing youth capabilities
2. Enhancing youth motivation
3. Ensuring skill generalization
4. Structuring the environment
5. Enhancing staff capabilities and motivation to deliver treatment effectively

Recent Legislative Changes

SB 1: General Appropriations Bill include a 15% salary increase for our direct care staff. These salary increases are allocated for JCOs, Team Leads, Case Managers, Case Manager Supervisors, Cooks, and Food Service Managers. This puts our direct care staff salaries more competitive in comparable jobs across the state and among our national peers. When Director Carter began as ED in 2022, TJJD's JCO salaries ranked 36th out of 50 nationally.

SB 1737: will add several TJJD facility staff to the Law Enforcement & Custodial Officers (LECO) retirement system. This benefit investment will improve TJJD's recruitment and retention efforts.

HB 500: Investments in TJJD

New Builds – The legislature fully funded TJJD's two new builds and approved Ellis and Brazoria Counties as their locations. These facilities will each house 104 youth and one will serve violent offenders and the other will serve youth with the most severe mental health needs. These new builds will break ground in 2026 and currently plan to have them online and operational in early 2029.

Application Modernization – TJJD currently has 21 applications running on legacy technology, during the 89th Legislative Session the legislature funded enough to modernize 7 applications. The agency is preparing to ask the legislature for funding the remaining 14 applications over the next two sessions.

Vehicle Refresh – The legislature provided \$7M in funding to update TJJD's vehicle fleet. The agency has also contracted with a provider for custom vehicles to transport youth within facilities, enhancing safety.

Other funding:

- Probation Funding
- Body Scanners
- PREA Compliance Analyst
- Nurse pay increase
- Computer refresh
- Uniforms for JCOs
- CTE Enhancements
- Special Education

SB 2776: This allows the agency develop and expand the use of the Credible Messenger programs. Prior to this legislation, due to laws regarding the confidentiality of minors, TJJD could not confirm or deny whether or not any adult had been in the agency's care and custody as a juvenile. This legislation allows consenting adults to be identified as having been in TJJD's secure facilities. This is important because current youth hearing former TJJD youth's stories and how they've applied the lessons they learned while in TJJD's custody positively impacts youth outcomes.

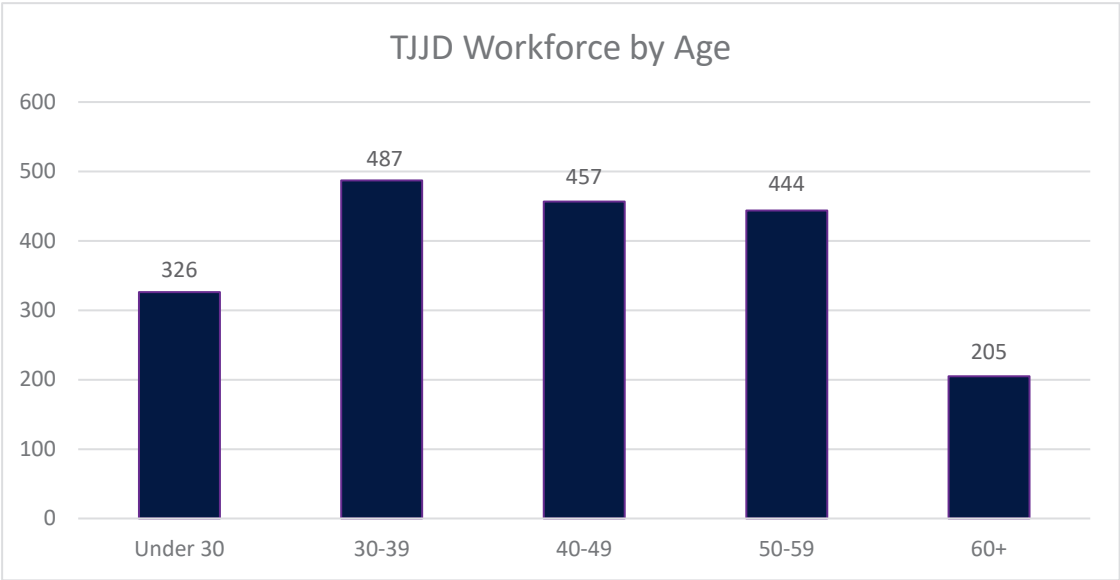
HB 4263: This adjusted TJJD's Release Review Panel (RRP) structure and aligned the grievance practice with that of other agencies. The RRP will now be handled by staff with direct facility experience and expertise, but not with those who directly manage the youth up for review. It also eliminates the agency's requirement to allow a dismissal mediation. Since TJJD already offers pre-termination vetting and due process to employees as well as post-termination grievance options, the mediation was redundant, time consuming, and unnecessary.

Section II: Workforce Analysis

Current Workforce Profile – Demand Analysis

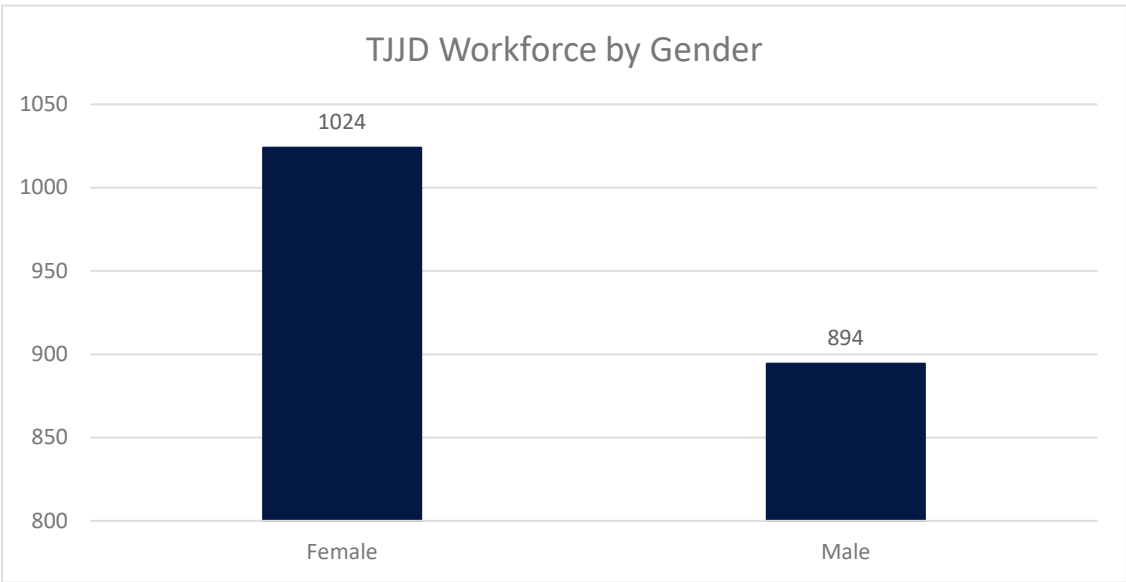
Below, TJJJ has provided statistical information regarding its workforce as of April 30, 2026. Charts are included in the following subsection based on SAO instructions.

Age



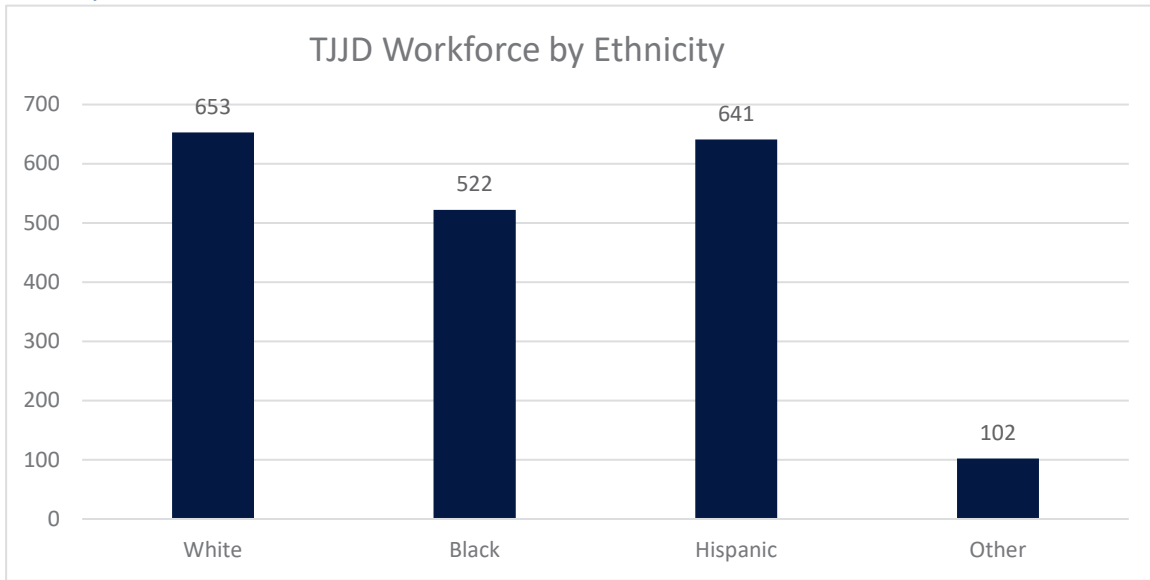
TJJJ currently employs 1,918 individuals and employee age clusters around the middle categories with fewer staff falling into older (60+) or younger (<30) categories. The largest age category is 30-39 with approximately 25.4% of staff members falling into this category.

Gender



The TJJJ workforce has a slightly higher percentage of female employees (53%) than male employees (47%).

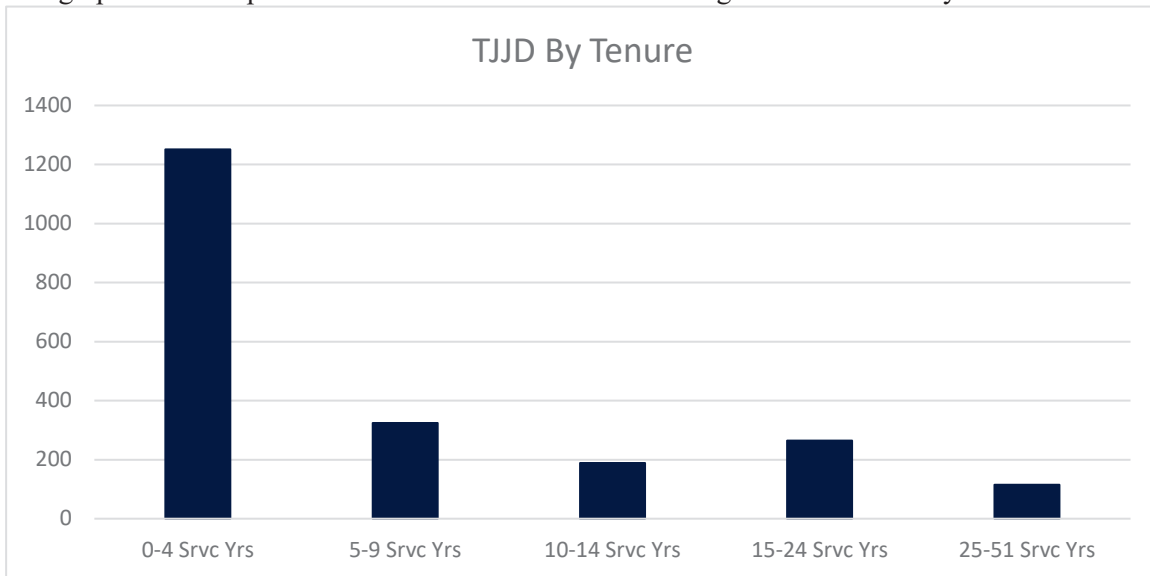
Ethnicity



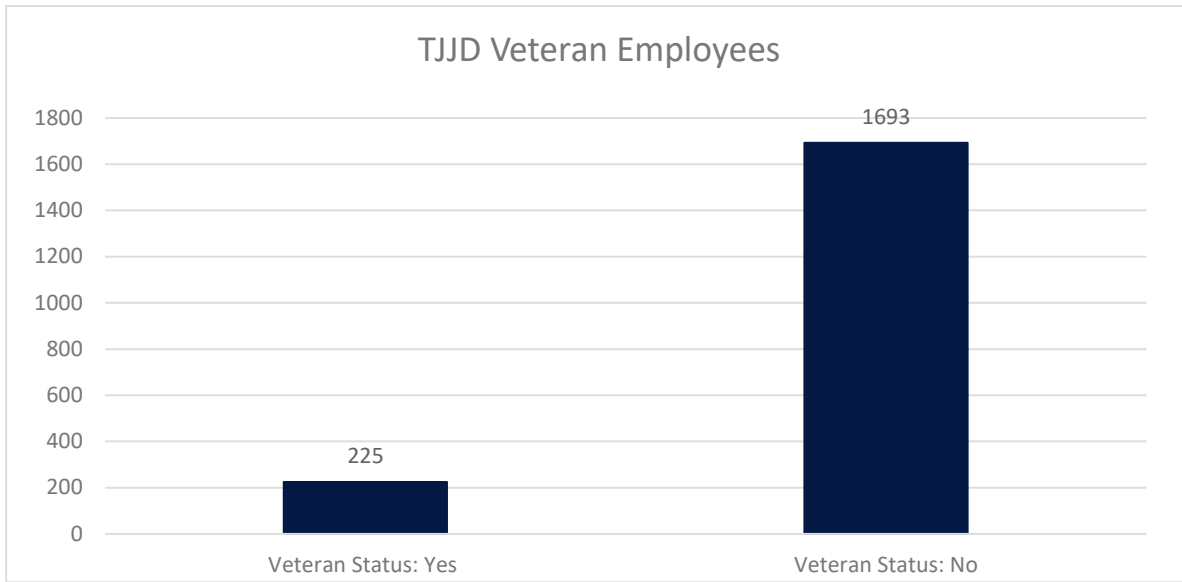
The TJJD workforce is 34% White, 33% Hispanic, 27% Black, and 6% Other.

Length of service

The graphs below represent staff tenure from the least to the greatest number of years.

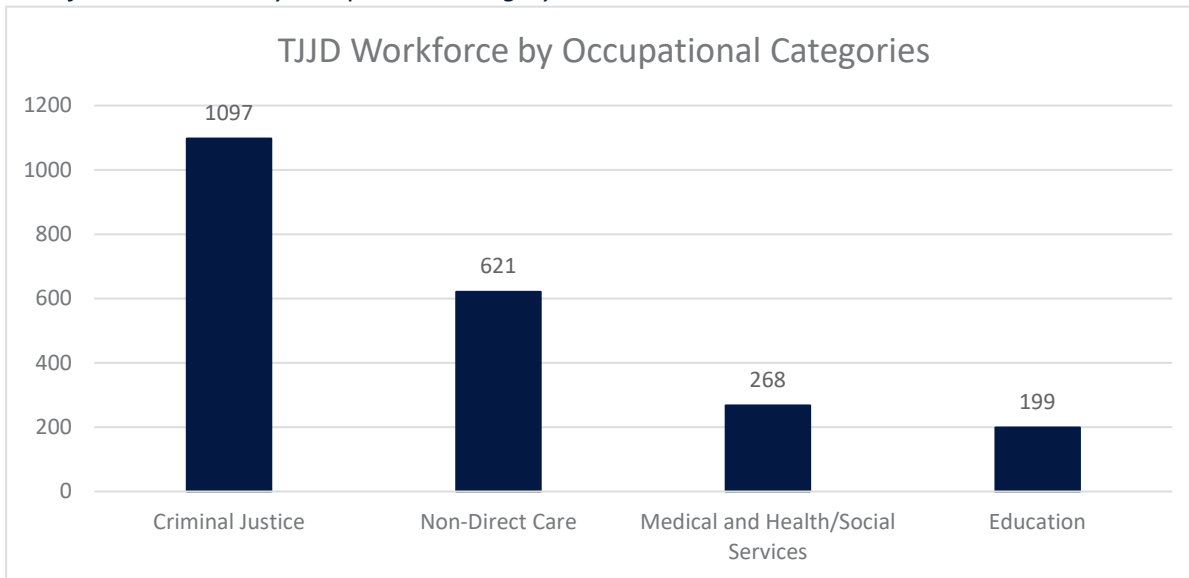


Percent of veterans employed by the agency



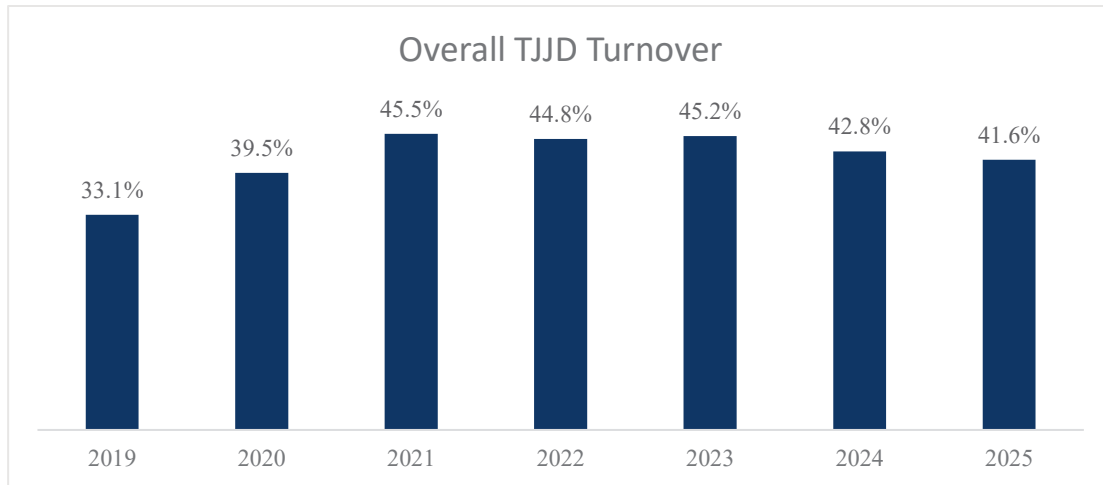
The vast majority of TJJD employees are not veterans (88%). However, the agency has worked diligently to recruit veterans and military service members and will continue doing so in the upcoming biennium.

Workforce allocation by occupational category

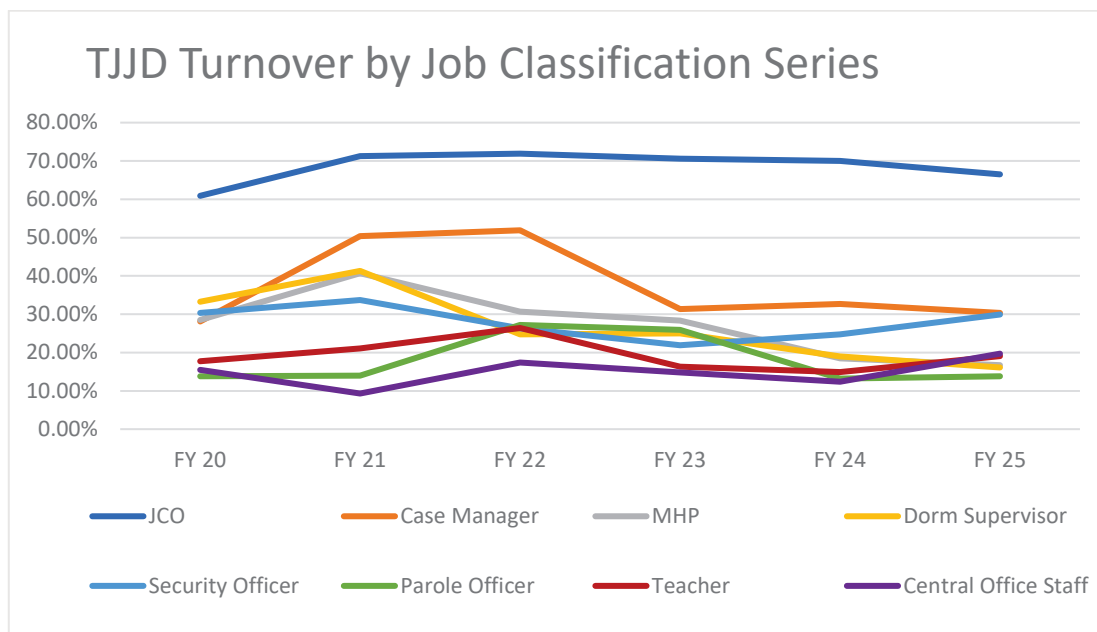


This profile uses the occupational categories identified in the FYs 2025-2026 SAO Job Classification Index of Criminal Justice, Education, Medical and Health/Social Services, and Non-Direct Care. “Criminal Justice” remains the category with the most employees, followed by non-direct care employees such as administrative support staff.

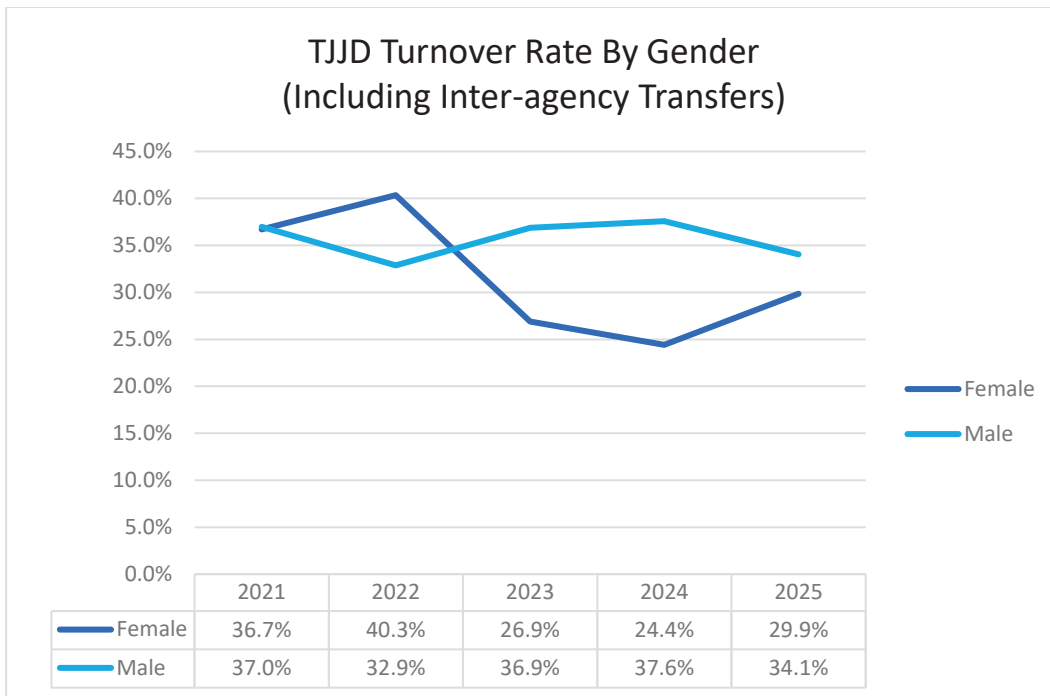
Total agency turnover, including turnover by certain job classification, gender, and ethnicity



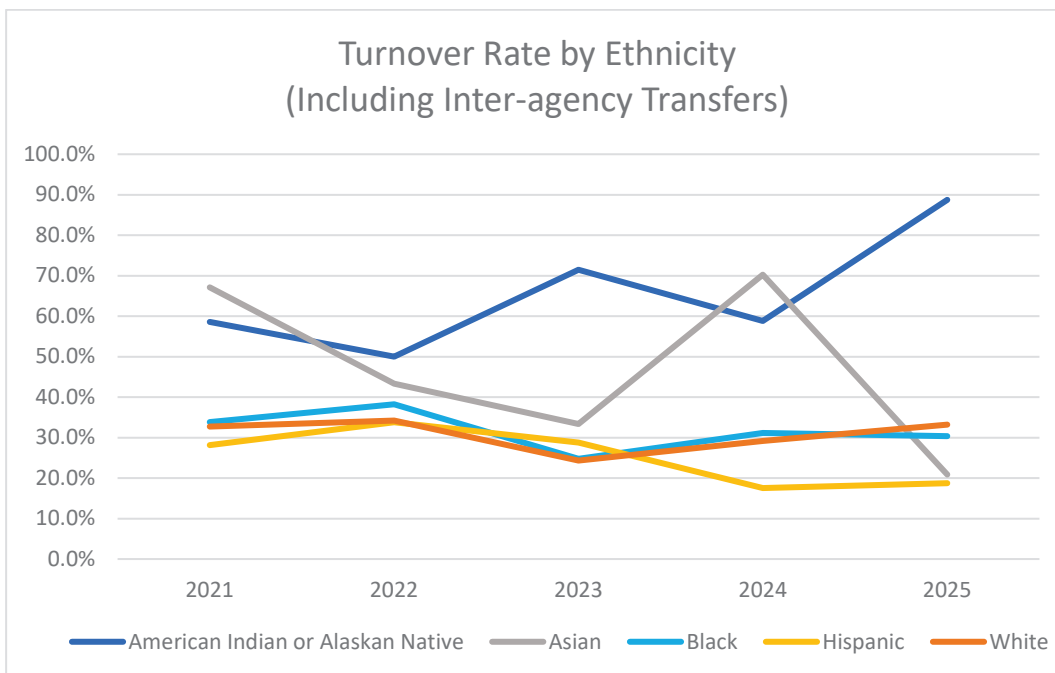
Overall turnover remains high but has leveled after increasing from FYs 2019 to 2021.



Case manager positions have shown noteworthy improvement in turnover after worsening in FYs 2021 and 2022. Juvenile correctional officer (JCO) turnover remains high but have started to stabilize due to investments in salary and benefits from the legislature. Insufficient staffing strength impacts facility safety, culture, and programming, which further fuels turnover and creates a cycle of retention challenges.



Turnover is marginally but consistently higher among male staff members.



Turnover has returned to pre-pandemic levels for the “Black” and “White” categories, and has improved in the “Hispanic” category. The other categories include a comparatively small sample size (6% of total employees as of May 2026) and consequently fluctuates to a greater extent than the “Black,” “Hispanic,” and “White” categories.

Agency Tenure and Turnover Summary

The average tenure of all TJJD employees was 4.8 years at the end of fiscal year 2025. Average tenure among JCOs, the largest job category within the agency, was 3.1 years. However, the average tenure among JCO Vs and Dorm Supervisors at the end of fiscal year 2025 was approximately 8.4 years, indicating that as JCOs move up their career ladder, they tend to stay longer. At the same time in September 2024, almost half of JCOs working in secure facilities were still within their first year of agency service. This breakdown demonstrates the need for TJJD's constant focus on both the fundamentals of facility operations with new staff and forward-thinking culture change with more tenured staff.

Along with tenure, TJJD tracks the age of employees to prevent gaps in staffing levels and institutional knowledge that may occur as long-time workers retire. At the end of fiscal year 2025, the average age across all TJJD employees was 43 years old. The average and median ages of JCOs were 37 and 34, respectively. The largest age categories among all TJJD employees and among JCOs were those under 30 and those aged 30 to 39, with a nearly equal number of staff in each group.

Critical Workforce Skills and Functions

General Workforce Skills and Functions

The majority of the agency's positions perform duties that involve:

- Interacting directly with TJJD-committed youth inside state-operated secure facilities or medium-restriction halfway houses, youth on TJJD parole, and families of youth;
- Managing the operations of state facilities, including the programs and services provided within the facilities; and
- Maintaining cooperation with, monitoring certain functions of, and providing training and other support to county juvenile probation departments and agencies providing prevention and early intervention programs, operating county-level facilities, or operating other community-based programs.

Critical workforce skills necessary to fulfill these duties effectively and efficiently include the ability to:

- Perform job responsibilities in a correctional setting with aggressive or combative youth who have high-level treatment needs;
- Work with highly dysregulated youth in a manner that emphasizes safety, accountability, and transparency;
- Maintain order and youth accountability;
- Act quickly, safely, and in accordance with agency training during emergencies;
- Perform verbal and physical crisis intervention and de-escalation techniques;
- Intervene, correct behavior, and facilitate discussions or counseling sessions, depending on employee's position;
- Direct and facilitate individual and group activities;
- Develop and/or implement case plans;
- Support the goals of or directly implement specialized treatment programs (e.g., mental health, sex offender, alcohol and other drug treatment);
- Foster the cooperation of youth in the rehabilitation, treatment, and education process;
- Communicate effectively with youth and explain their progress to family members and other direct care staff;

- Conduct reading interventions and other learning needs interventions;
- Develop and evaluate new programming to meet the evolving needs of committed youth;
- Establish program goals and objectives, and track progress toward those goals and objectives;
- Identify problems, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, and implement effective solutions;
- Interpret and apply rules and regulations, and provide technical assistance to stakeholders;
- Identify measures or indicators of program performance, conduct reviews of performance, and assess the findings;
- Assess training needs and provide responsive training opportunities;
- Maintain adequate and accurate records;
- Review technical data, and prepare or direct the preparation of technical and management reports; and
- Use high-level data and informational reports as an administrative management tool.

Additionally, JCOs are required by Human Resources Code Section 242.009 to complete at least 300 hours of training in the first year of employment, with at least 240 hours of training before the officer independently commences their duties at a facility. This training must include information and instruction concerning:

- The juvenile justice system of this state, including the juvenile correctional facility system;
- Security procedures;
- The supervision of youth committed to TJJD;
- Signs of suicide risks and suicide precautions;
- Signs and symptoms of the abuse, assault, neglect, and exploitation of a youth, including sexual abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking, and the manner in which to report the abuse, assault, neglect, or exploitation of a youth;
- The neurological, physical, and psychological development of adolescents;
- TJJD rules and regulations, including rules, regulations, and tactics concerning the use of force;
- Appropriate restraint techniques;
- The Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 (42 U.S.C. Section 15601, et seq.);
- The rights and responsibilities of youth in TJJD's custody;
- Interpersonal relationship skills;
- The social and cultural lifestyles of youth in TJJD's custody;
- First aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation;
- Counseling techniques;
- Conflict resolution and dispute mediation, including de-escalation techniques;
- Behavior management;
- Mental health issues;
- Employee rights, employment discrimination, and sexual harassment; and
- Trauma-informed care.

Major Factors Influencing Current Workforce and Supply of Workforce

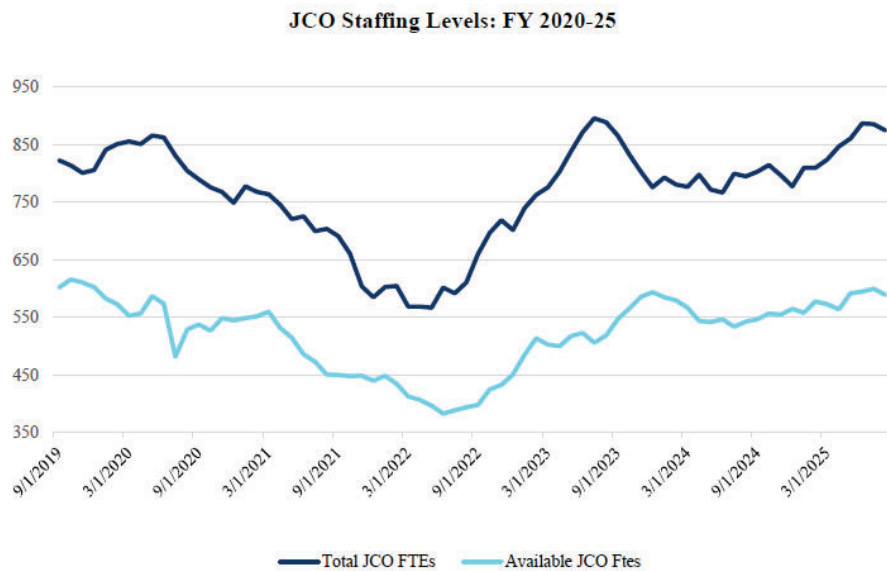
The needed supply for the workforce at TJJD and in the probation field is largely driven by juvenile justice population trends. At the county level, formal referrals to juvenile probation departments have returned to pre-pandemic levels. Adult certification dispositions are stabilizing, while TJJD commitment dispositions increased during the first half of FY 2026. State-level trends include a rise in new admissions to TJJD with higher risk profiles, particularly for youth with the most serious offense histories, reflecting an increased need for specialized treatment and behavior management. The average daily population in state-operated facilities increased at the same time as the waitlist increased, causing consistent strain on county- and state-level resources. Higher-risk youth are harder to supervise and safely release, causing contract care options to nearly disappear and parole populations to decrease.

The impact of economic pressure, coupled with changes in the juvenile justice landscape such as an intensifying youth risk profiles, cannot be understated. Together, these factors have made juvenile justice jobs more demanding in both financial and practical terms. Raises for JCOs have helped TJJD hire new staff and manage a rising youth population in secure facilities. However, this hiring alone has only enabled an average daily population increase of about 100 youth. A balanced, continual investment in TJJD's direct care staff, in terms of appropriate compensation, improving facility culture, and training and leadership development are simultaneously necessary to ensure TJJD's initiatives succeed and communities are kept safe.

TJJD secure facilities are a critical piece of the juvenile justice system but are simply one piece. When building sustainable workforce solutions for juvenile justice, TJJD and state leaders must carefully consider strategies to expand local probation capacity, fully leverage existing secure facilities while new ones are built, and provide viable transition opportunities for youth to exit TJJD, whether to TJJD parole or TDCJ's custody.

Workforce Turnover

While annual turnover rates were relatively stable between fiscal years 2020 and 2024, the crisis hit when agency departures outstripped hiring, causing shortages shown in the graph on the next page. During the summer of 2022 when juvenile correctional officer (JCO) levels fell to their lowest point, TJJD's five secure facilities collectively operated at roughly 200% of their available staffing capacity. Overstretched operations impacted facility culture, overall safety, and programming. Long shifts and challenging working environments compounded existing turnover issues, which intensified a cycle of increased burdens on the staff who remained at facilities and dedicated their time to ensuring safety.



As shown in the graph above, TJJD has seen recent improvements in JCO coverage. With the addition of hundreds of new JCOs, secure facilities have also increased their average daily population by over 200 youth since the summer of 2022. At the same time, the agency was able to bolster access to treatment providers by adjusting mental health staff-to-youth ratios from 1:16 to 1:12, 1:8, or 1:4, depending on a youth’s programming needs.

Future Workforce Profile and Expected Changes – Demand Analysis

Role-Specific Workforce Skills Needed and Functions

Juvenile Correctional Officers

TJJD’s JCOs have a tremendously challenging job. These positions, which are vital to public safety, involve long and demanding hours including weekends and holidays, on-call statuses, and overnight shifts. They regularly encounter violent, aggressive, or self-injurious behaviors exhibited by youth, necessitating quick thinking, de-escalation skills, and the ability to maintain order and safety at all times. This environment exposes JCOs to high levels of stress, emotional strain, and the risk of physical harm or injury. Their roles encompass facets of law enforcement, behavior management, mentoring, and crisis intervention, requiring a diverse skillset and a deep understanding of TJJD’s trauma-responsive behavior management approach. This involves utilizing the appropriate intervention methods in response to behavioral issues to aid in correcting behavior and teaching new skills, maintaining a consistently safe and structured environment, and employing security measures when youth pose a threat to safety. These factors collectively contribute to the recognition that JCOs face some of the toughest challenges and responsibilities within the state workforce. In a very real sense, these employees are first responders and deserve this designation.

Critical workforce skills and functions for JCOs include:

- Maintaining a clear understanding of youth development and youth rights to ensure effective engagement with and accountability for youth in TJJD's custody.
- Maintaining legally required supervision of youth in various settings, including dorms, cafeteria, and recreation, ensuring safety and security of the facility at all times. Maintaining orderly transition to and from daily activities across the secure facility.
- Ensuring compliance with rules for residential facilities, using disciplinary and non-disciplinary techniques to maintain safety and order. Assisting youth in basic behavior change principles and interventions, providing skills to respond to behavioral and emotional challenges, helping youth develop positive and more skillful behavior.
- Providing guidance, support, and reinforcement to youth, helping them develop skillful behavior to replace problem behaviors.
- Maintaining accurate records and reports on youth behavior, incidents, and activities, ensuring all documentation is completed thoroughly and timely.
- Conducting regular safety checks, suicide alert protocols, searches, and inspections to prevent contraband, ensure secure environments, and respond to serious incidents.
- Ensuring compliance with Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and preventing abuse, neglect, and exploitation.
- Facilitating and ensuring youth participation in the daily schedule and redirecting behaviors that affect the delivery of the daily schedule.
- Mediating conflicts between youth by using de-escalation techniques to resolve issues. Responding appropriately and safely to potentially dangerous situations, in adherence to TJJD Use of Force policy and Handle with Care© approved methods.
- Collaborating with case managers and mental health professionals to ensure effectual behavioral management across settings.
- Monitoring the physical and mental health of youth, providing first aid when necessary, and ensuring access to medical and specialized treatment.
- Transporting youth to and from other secure facilities, court hearings, and other off-site activities as required.

Case Managers

Case Managers perform an essential role in our system, safeguarding public safety by ensuring youth are accountable to what is expected of them so they may progress through TJJD's programming. They serve as steady hands to ensure that juveniles comprehend their circumstances within the juvenile justice system and outline the pathway to safe reintegration into society and the consequences for the inability to achieve it. Their role extends to building trusting relationships youth, youth families, and other staff; explaining programmatic requirements; celebrating successes and responding appropriately to areas for growth; and facilitating transitions to new challenges, with the overarching goal of ensuring public safety and fostering positive outcomes for Texas communities.

Critical workforce skills and functions for case managers include:

- Conducting comprehensive assessments of youth risks and needs to develop individualized plans.
- Updating individualized case plans that outline goals, target behaviors, and interventions tailored to each youth's specific risk factors.
- Coordinating with various staff members, including JCOs, mental health professionals, specialized treatment providers, to ensure progress toward case plan goals and create a cohesive and structured environment for youth.
- Meet with youth regularly to review progress in meeting their case plan goals, making adjustments as necessary.
- Providing individual sessions to address behavioral issues and conduct behavior chain analyses to identify target behaviors in response to incidents.
- Maintaining detailed and accurate case records, documenting interactions, progress, and any changes to the case plan.
- Engaging and working with families to support the youth's goals and case plan when the youth returns to the community.
- Preparing reports and documentation regarding the youth's progress, compliance with the treatment plan, and recommendations for future interventions.
- Assisting JCOs in facilitating programs on the dorm to help youth develop competencies for successful reentry.
- Identifying and connecting youth and their families with external resources, such as substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and educational programs.
- Developing and implementing aftercare plans in coordination with parole staff to ensure continuity of care and support once the youth is released from the facility.

Mental Health Professionals

Our mental health professionals play a crucial role in ensuring public safety within our system. They serve as pillars of expertise and support, making sure that juveniles receive comprehensive assessments, individualized treatment plans, and the necessary individual and group therapy sessions. MHPs also assess and identify skills that youth must learn and that are directly related to each youth's treatment plan. Their expertise ensures that each youth's treatment plan is tailored to their unique needs, addressing underlying mental health challenges and promoting positive behavioral outcomes. Our mental health professionals contribute significantly to the overall mission of bolstering public safety and fostering improved outcomes for youth by working with JCOs and case managers to implement these case plans effectively.

Critical workforce skills and functions for mental health professionals include:

- Conducting a variety of comprehensive psychological and behavioral assessments to diagnose mental health conditions and identify specialized treatment needs.
- Developing individualized treatment plans based on assessment results, outlining therapeutic goals, youth participation, interventions, and strategies.
- Providing individual, group, and family therapy to address mental health diagnoses and emotional/cognitive challenges.
- Responding during mental health crises by providing support for case managers and JCOs, developing safety and behavior support plans, and reviewing suicide alert protocols.
- Coordinating with psychiatrists and other medical professionals to manage and monitor the use of psychiatric medications.

- Implementing evidence-based behavioral interventions to help youth develop skillful behavior, manage dysregulation, and manage symptoms.
- Collaborating with case managers, JCOs, and other staff to ensure staff are reinforcing the same areas of focus in various settings.
- Maintaining accurate and confidential records of assessments, treatment, sessions, and progress.
- Providing clinical expertise and support to staff on mental health symptoms, trauma-responsive behavior management, and effective intervention strategies.

Factors Influencing the Agency's Ability to Compete in the Labor Market

As described in the previous sections, these professionals require specialized training and skills to effectively manage and rehabilitate youth. Competing in the labor market requires not only offering attractive compensation and benefits but also providing opportunities for professional development within the agency. A stable and skilled JCO workforce enhances the agency's reputation and reinforces our ability to fulfill our core value of promoting public safety. Thus, investing in the recruitment, training, and retention of competent JCOs is essential for the agency's long-term success and sustainability.

During the 89th legislative session, TJJD received significant funding increases to boost salaries and address critical staffing issues, particularly among JCOs. The agency was provided a \$19.3M increase in appropriations for all JCOs, representing a 15% salary increase over FY 2026. The below chart provides details on starting salary base pay for JCOs, which is the most difficult to fill position in the agency:

Year	JCO Starting Pay	% Increase
FY2018	\$ 31,512	
FY2019	\$ 36,238	15%
FY2020	\$ 36,238	0%
FY2021	\$ 36,238	0%
FY2022	\$ 36,238	0%
FY2023	\$ 41,674	15%
FY2024	\$ 44,674	7%
FY2025	\$ 47,674	7%
FY2026	\$ 54,825	15%

The graph below shows the immediate positive impact of raises. Within months, TJJD was able to hire hundreds of additional JCOs. With more staff, the number of days that youth experienced outside of normal programming fell, alongside the number of suicide assessments that resulted in increased supervision levels (e.g., 1:1 ratios for youth demonstrating the greatest risk of danger or self-harm). Further, exit survey analyses showed a decrease in the number of JCOs citing pay as a reason for leaving the agency.

Additionally, for our country partners, the 88th Legislature provided funding for a 5% salary increase for select Juvenile Probation Department (JPD) positions in fiscal years 2024 and 2025. This request for fiscal years 2026 and 2027 included a 10% increase for vacant positions to help meet staffing needs and a 10.25% increase for JPD mental health positions, which were not included in the previous funding. The Legislature fully funded this item.

Facility	County	Civilian Labor Force	Unemployed Persons	Unemployment Rate (%)	Staffing Strength ²¹
Evins	Hidalgo	397,837	26,748	6.7%	95%
Gainesville	Cooke	22,351	851	3.8%	79%
Giddings	Lee	9,294	356	3.8%	78%
Mart	McLennan	131,088	5,643	4.3%	87%
Ron Jackson	Brown	17,574	732	4.2%	85%
New Facility	Ellis	122,032	4,938	4.0%	NA
New Facility	Brazoria	199,300	9,536	4.8%	NA

While maintaining its existing facilities, TJJD is also actively working with state partners to expand state-level juvenile justice capacity in areas near population centers. During the 88th Regular Legislative Session, lawmakers adopted Rider 41 into TJJD’s bill pattern, which appropriated \$200 million for the expansion of state-level facility capacity by 208 beds. During the 89th Regular Legislative Session, lawmakers allocated an additional \$104 million, bringing the total investment for both facilities to \$304 million. The project is both long-term and atypical, as a state agency has not directly built a new adult or juvenile correctional facility since 1997. The project offers opportunities to create spaces specifically designed for today’s youth and staff using expertise from similar agencies in other states, treatment professionals, operational leaders, and risk managers.

TJJD is on-track to bring two new facilities, to be located in Ellis and Brazoria counties, online by 2029. Together, these facilities will serve youth with the highest-level mental health and aggressive behavior treatment needs, along with general population youth as appropriate. By building two facilities rather than one, the agency will target multiple labor pools in areas within or near population centers to reduce the risk of staffing shortages. See the agency’s recent Rider 41 Report for more information on construction timelines, locations under consideration, and workforce analyses: <https://www.tjjd.texas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/TJJD-Rider-41-Report.pdf>.

The agency anticipates the new facilities will improve TJJD’s overall staffing strength because they will be located near workforce resources. However, construction will take years to complete and, with an expected opening date sometime in 2029, these facilities will not have an immediate impact on system outcomes.

Section III: Workforce Strategies

Organizational Change – Roles and Responsibilities

TJJD leadership staff were tasked with developing transformative initiatives that will reshape the agency into an unrecognizable entity with the utmost focus on public safety. Part of these initiatives includes a focus on developing staff leadership capabilities and building a robust pipeline of capable leaders who are ready to take on key roles within the organization as part of succession planning efforts. Direct efforts toward leadership development involve modeling high-level cross-collaboration, implementing significant and asynchronous training programs for all staff members, developing targeted management and leadership development programs for managers and rising leaders, and fostering a culture of transparency among leaders and staff alike. The focus ensures staff are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in their roles and an understanding of each employee's contribution to the agency's mission and success. By enhancing agency culture, improving operations, providing leadership training, and implementing innovative programs like the Texas Model, TJJD has become a more attractive employer, aligning with recruitment plans to invest in the talent of individuals who want to pursue a career in public safety.

These initiatives are currently underway and are explained in more detail below. The direct reports of each director listed manage unique tasks that support their divisional leaders, and so on throughout the organizational chart. The goal is that each employee in the agency be able to articulate and act upon their “vital few” or key priorities, all of which support the Executive Director's goals.

The Executive Director will:

- Monitor the roll out and embed the Texas Model to focuses on safety, accountability, and transparency.
- Implement strategies to drive agency culture change, enhance “teamliness”, and to achieve “unrecognizable” status.
- Represent TJJD at industry-aligned conferences, with critical stakeholders, and to the media.

The Deputy Executive Director will:

- Directly assist the Executive Director in leading the agency.
- Lead direct reports and divisions in modeling high-level cross-collaboration to effectively implement new programs, and to monitor and improve secure facility operations.
- Bring the agency vision to secure facilities and work closely with directors and facility leadership to ensure we improve the culture, coordination, and outcomes at secure facilities.

The Deputy Executive Director of Probation, Reentry, and Community Services will:

- Directly assist the Executive Director in leading the agency and county partners towards a single unified juvenile justice system.
- Build a Probation, Reentry, and Community Services Division with a shared vision and goals.
- Implement, provide assistance, and report on the performance of the additional funding provided to probation departments this biennium.
- Provide needed support to our state secure facilities, being present and engaged.

The Deputy Executive Director for Support Operations and Finance will:

- Ensure respective departments are functioning efficiently and meeting agency expectations.
- Collaborate with probation chiefs to promote TJJD grant programs and understand local funding needs.
- Provide greater efficiency and effective grant management for the system.
- Develop risk-based funding model for system, and educate stakeholders on details of funding model.

The General Counsel will:

- Evaluate and assess the OGC personnel's skills, talents, and contribution to the OGC and TJJD, resulting in informed decisions regarding staffing needs, staffing assignments, and staffing salaries.
- Examine and evaluate the current laws, policies, and practices regarding processes which the OGC supervises, conducts, or reviews, and make recommendations for changes and improvements in light of TJJD's changing youth profile.

The Chief of Staff will:

- Assist with implementation of the Executive Director's "vital few".
- Monitor and develop various reports required by the state of Texas, such as this strategic plan, Sunset Self Evaluation Report, Regionalization Plan, etc. and carry out other directives from state leadership.
- Maintain strong, accountable, and transparent relationships with the probation field, the Legislature, and other stakeholders so all groups have an accurate view of our work, successes, and challenges.
- Refine and develop support structures for the board to facilitate members' engagement, active oversight, and positive impact.

Recruitment Initiatives

TJJD is currently implementing the following recruitment initiatives and evaluating other opportunities:

- Outreach to local universities and colleges with criminal justice programs to attract students interested in juvenile justice careers.
- Hosting career fairs or information sessions at colleges and military installations to engage with possible candidates considering a career in law enforcement or social work.
- Utilizing social media platforms to advertise job openings and highlight the department's mission and values, including a third party marketing firm running social media ads (launching Summer 2026).
- Partnering with community organizations and nonprofits that focus on youth populations to reach potential candidates.
- Offering internships or volunteer opportunities to students interested in gaining experience in juvenile justice.
- Career fairs and events specifically tailored to criminal justice professionals.
- Providing comprehensive training and professional development opportunities to attract and retain talented individuals in juvenile justice careers.
- Streamlining the hiring process to increase the timeliness of employment offers.

Retention Initiatives

TJJD is currently implementing the following retention initiatives and evaluating other opportunities:

- Expanding initiatives developed from employee survey findings, including the executive director's call for proposals initiative, location-specific town halls, increased support presence in secure facilities to communicate and align vision, and the development of staff to maintain structure.
- Evaluating salaries to ensure they are competitive with similar roles in other sectors to attract and retain talented staff.
- Fostering a positive workplace culture where staff feel valued, respected, and supported by their supervisors and colleagues.
- Implemented staff wellness rooms and have a dedicated wellness team for staff needing additional guidance, resources, and support through difficulties at work.
- Pairing new staff with experienced mentors to provide guidance, support, and encouragement as they navigate their roles, including the buddy system for JCOs.
- Offering ongoing training programs for career advancement in the form of role-specific and generalized training opportunities, including:
 - Full implementation of DBT skills training groups for key staff across the agency to ensure staff have the tools necessary to operate safe and accountable dorm environments.
 - Full implementation of targeted, routinized training programs on behavior chain analysis.
- Launching a leadership academy focused on identifying and investing in leaders across the agency.
- Providing in-house continuing education credits for licensed mental health professionals and expanding to other licensed professionals where appropriate.
- Providing clear pathways for career advancement within the organization, including opportunities for promotion through the JCO career ladder and other leadership roles for talented employees.
- Strengthening programs to recognize and reward outstanding staff performance, including bonuses, incentives, awards, or public acknowledgment.
- Evaluating methods to include employees working non-traditional shifts (e.g., overnight, weekend, and holidays) in recognition initiatives.
- Promoting employee wellness through policies and initiatives that support healthy work-life balance, including the employee wellness program, encouraging regular appointments with medical and mental health professionals, leveraging schedule within the context of 24/7 operations to ensure maximum flexibility and the ability to use paid leave and compensatory time, and evaluating critical incident debriefings to ensure Critical Incident Stress Management techniques are included.
- Providing team-building opportunities to reduce interpersonal conflict at work and increase morale by improving working environment.
- Enhancing internal communications, including monthly messages from the executive director, a revamped intranet page, and a quarterly newsletter, to ensure staff feel informed about agency changes and initiatives.
- Regularly soliciting feedback from staff through surveys, supervision sessions, or one-on-one meetings to understand concerns and identify areas for improvement.
- Advertising comprehensive state benefits, including health insurance, retirement plans, and other Employee Assistance Program opportunities that contribute to overall job satisfaction.

Leadership Development and Succession Planning Initiatives

Eliminating workforce gaps requires not only a robust labor pool from which to recruit employees but also strong supervisors to lead, retain, and support those employees. Together, supervisors at TJJD are tasked with:

- Improving vertical and horizontal communication throughout TJJD's organizational chart;
- Providing line staff with the resources and role clarification they need to fulfill their job duties;
- Shaping agency culture to align with TJJD's foundational pillars of safety, accountability, and transparency; and
- Building lines of succession as employees leave the agency or change positions.

TJJD has implemented various strategies to accomplish the tasks listed above including but not limited to the following:

- Regular training opportunities. Staff receive regular training to ensure the agency is responsive to the dynamic needs of committed youth and best equipped to implement agency initiatives. For example, JCOs and case managers engage in weekly trainings to learn about, discuss, and practice DBT skills that are critical to the Texas Model. Trainings include information on roles in facility operations that prioritize a rehabilitative milieu in which youth are held accountable for their behavior.
- Strengthening Supervision. In recent years, staff surveys showed a clear need for more effective, communicative, and attentive supervisors across the agency. Staff reported they were promoted because they were particularly effective at their previous role, only to find they needed an expanded — or even entirely new — skillset to serve as a supervisor. In response, TJJD partnered with workforce development experts to create the agency's Strengthening Supervision training. Through a two-day intensive session, one-day follow-up, and sustainability program, supervisors at TJJD learn best practices covering a variety of topics, including navigating team conflict, addressing employee burnout, solving cross-divisional problems, and supporting skill development among direct reports.
- Advanced Leadership Academy. Designed to support budding leaders across TJJD, two cohorts of 15 employees participate in this 6-month leadership experience annually. Through this program, employees learn how to identify their own leadership skills, how to motivate their teams, and how to build a lasting culture of leadership and accountability. This program culminates in a "capstone" project in which each employee identifies and researches a specific area they want to improve at the agency.
- Mentorships. Beyond day-to-day supervisors, employees in leadership roles have also communicated a need for assistance with and attention on professional development. TJJD's mentorship program uses feedback from supervisors to identify areas of growth for specific employees and match them with other staff who can provide additional support. The program aims to improve cross-agency communication, demonstrate clear investment in employee needs, and promote a collaborative leadership model that aligns with TJJD's values.

Strategies to Address Recruitment, Retention, and Morale

Below, TJJD has compiled a list that, while non-exhaustive, describes many initiatives employees are implementing each day to increase staffing strength and improve morale. The list contains efforts that the agency plans to continue or expand moving forward, subject to resource availability. For more information on any particular initiative, contact the agency at any time.

Notably, TJJD faces too many urgent issues to adopt only one innovation at a time. The initiatives highlighted below are occurring simultaneously, and measuring the unique impact of one effort versus another lies beyond staff's capacity. However, a review of internal surveys conducted between fiscal years 2019 and 2025 have shown a variety of positive outcomes following reform implementation, including:

- Increased job satisfaction;
- Increased feelings of safety in secure facilities;
- Increased feelings that an individual's role within the agency aligns with their skillset;
- Improved relationships and communication between supervisors and their direct reports;
- Increased perceptions of TJJD as a fair organization;
- Greater collective efficacy (i.e., an individual's belief about their group's ability to
 - A stronger sense of camaraderie, trust, and connection between coworkers; and
 - Increased perceptions that staff share similar values and will provide assistance to each other when needed.

Efforts to Improve Recruitment and Job Flexibility

- **Streamlined the hiring process.** TJJD's Human Resources staff took various steps to improve the hiring process so divisions throughout the agency could better identify qualified candidates and bring them onto the team as quickly as possible. For example, staff expanded use of the state applicant tracking platform, automated background check processes, updated applications to make them more user-friendly, and instituted group interviews and preset questions where appropriate. The agency will keep looking for opportunities to increase efficiencies within the hiring process. For example, the agency will work with other state agencies and criminal justice entities to review their hiring processes and make improvements as appropriate.
- **Implemented recruitment bonuses.** The agency uses various types of recruitment bonuses to expand its pool of available staff. Existing employees may receive a bonus for referring qualified individuals to serve as JCOs. Additionally, the agency offers bonuses to individuals who are hired for hard-to-fill positions or to work at understaffed facilities. Over the next fiscal year, TJJD will continue using this incentive, subject to resource availability.
- **Hired recruiters to represent secure facilities and target hard-to-fill positions.** These recruiters lead efforts in and around communities surrounding secure facilities. Additionally, TJJD's Manager of Recruitment and Retention works directly with universities and provider networks to develop a pipeline through which mental health professionals can intern for, contract with, or obtain full-time employment within TJJD's treatment team. In fiscal year 2026, the agency plans to expand this pipeline to include additional universities, as well as target JCO and research positions.
- **Broadened outreach to community partners near secure facilities.** TJJD recruiters and other staff work on the ground in Texas communities to connect with local organizations and workforce development professionals, attend job fairs, appear on radio programs, and distribute written materials about TJJD employment opportunities. The agency aims to expand this outreach further by developing consistent relationships with local elected officials, community groups, and businesses.

- **Increased the development of promotional content.** TJJD’s communications team has ramped up the creation of both agency-wide and facility-specific materials aimed at supporting recruiters and staff in attracting applicants. This is part of a broader, more targeted effort to enhance outreach and engagement through strategic communications. This year, the agency intends to further expand its communications team by increasing staffing support, enabling the team to better focus on developing and distributing content through new channels, including a regular e-newsletter. The e-newsletter will spotlight agency initiatives, job openings, and other key updates, reaching a wider audience with tailored messaging.
- **Offered free supervision and training to MHPs.** TJJD continues to provide its MHPs with free supervision and training on cutting-edge treatment modalities such as Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing and Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics. TJJD also serves as a continuing education provider so MHPs can obtain training hours required by their respective licensing boards in part by attending internal professional development opportunities. Supervision and training opportunities allow the agency to attract and retain MHP applicants and “grow our own” professionals as they seek licensure. The agency aims to host its own mental health conference in the future to expand MHP recruitment gains and offer another professional development tool to existing employees.
- **Attended conferences, community gatherings, and other events whenever possible to connect with potential applicants.** Agency leadership tasked key employees, particularly treatment leaders, researchers, and probation support staff, with attending state and national events where they could act as TJJD’s ambassadors. This allows teams to develop relationships with and ultimately recruit experts in the juvenile justice field. Through this work, TJJD leaders connected with a renowned correctional researcher who now contracts with the agency to study recruitment, retention, and culture change initiatives, as discussed later in this section. TJJD will continue this effort moving forward, subject to funding availability.
- **Removed barriers to entry into agency positions.** The agency has reviewed and made changes to job qualifications where appropriate to remove unnecessary barriers while maintaining professionalism and safety. For example, while degrees are required for TJJD’s teachers to qualify for employment, certification is only preferred. This opens up opportunities for passionate and effective individuals to join TJJD’s team and continue receiving the professional development they require to move up on the agency’s career ladder. As needed, the agency will make similar changes to eligibility for other positions. Note, the agency has no current plans to update JCO eligibility requirements.
- **Prioritized internal bench-building initiatives.** TJJD has developed various programs and training opportunities to fill positions from within. These include assigned mentorships and leadership development initiatives within and across teams. The agency will continue to use these tools to identify, publicly acknowledge, and tap into existing talent.
- **Offered telehealth options as appropriate.** When possible, TJJD’s treatment professionals — particularly those contracted to provide medical services through the University of Texas Medical Branch — may use telehealth technology to assist youth remotely. The agency has been researching ways to increase access to tablets on campus for youth and staff, which may offer ways to expand these opportunities. However, expansion must also consider facility security and the efficacy of service delivery.
- **Joined professional networks to enhance recruitment connections.** For example, education leaders in the agency are members of the Texas Association of School Administrators, which allows the agency to benefit from learning opportunities and share job openings with fellow members. The agency will

continue seeking out similar associations and community groups to assist recruiters with filling hard-to-staff positions.

- **Improving Information Technology solutions.** In navigating technological advancements, TJJD faces dual concerns: optimizing new technology to streamline staff workflows and safeguarding data from cyber threats. Priority lies in securing data integrity to inform policy and legislative decisions effectively. Continuous adaptation is crucial to fortify firewalls, encryption, and data security measures against evolving cyber risks. Identifying systems ripe for modernization, such as transitioning to digital incident reporting and compliant audio-to-text conversions, enhances operational efficiency. Key goals include fostering an IT service culture, aligning departmental strategies with employee needs, ensuring data reliability for informed decision making, and outlining a comprehensive enterprise architecture to guide long-term system modernization efforts within TJJD. Current and upcoming projects aligned with these goals include:
 - Deployed a new youth case management system this calendar year and retiring TJJD’s current antiquated system.
 - Enhancing and protecting the network to safeguard agency information, including expanding youth and JCO access to computers and tablets within facilities and providing reliable Wi-Fi in all secure locations.
 - Organizing and leading efforts to expand data-sharing capabilities between county probation departments to further the state’s goal of unifying the juvenile justice system.
- **Recruitment training for hiring managers.** The agency is collaborating with correctional industry experts to evaluate and enhance its hiring practices. This initiative aims to provide comprehensive training to TJJD leadership on best practices for recruitment and employee selection. Leadership has already undergone training focused on making strategic hires — focusing on candidates whose characteristics align with the agency’s mission, vision, values, goals, and foundational pillars. Going forward, this training will be extended to all levels of hiring managers across the system, ensuring a consistent and effective approach to talent acquisition.
- **College credits offered for training.** TJJD has partnered with Lamar College to provide college credits for JCOs who complete the training academy. As part of a partnership with Lamar State College Orange, New Hire Academy graduates are eligible for 12 hours of Criminal Justice college credit. Staff are enrolled with Lamar State College Orange on day 1 of New Hire Academy. After completion, grades are sent to Lamar State College Orange, and all graduates are eligible to convert their newly earned college credits toward a relevant degree or certification.
- **Creation of an advanced leadership academy.** An advanced leadership academy will equip TJJD professionals with the skills needed for senior leadership roles. The curriculum will be values-based, collaborative, and require attendance and participation in and out of the classroom. Lessons will include ethical leadership, strategic communications, team building and accountability, and crisis management. The course will combine in-person and virtual learning.

Efforts to Increase Employee Recognition, Support, and Advancement Opportunities

- **Revamped initial training.** As described in Section III, JCOs are the main employees driving TJJD’s high annual turnover rate. Some of these staff members rightfully determine early in training that juvenile justice work is not their calling. Others, however, require additional support to feel best equipped in their role. In 2024, TJJD altered the JCO training academy in a variety of ways to increase this support. For example, the academy now covers 240 hours of content (instead of 300) before new hires start working directly in a facility, as authorized in statute.²⁵ JCOs receive their remaining 60 hours of statutorily

mandated training later within their first year. This allows the agency to meet legislative expectations while also providing an opportunity to bring new JCOs back together, hear about their experiences, and provide supplemental tools and support as needed. Prior to receiving the additional hours of training, TJJD provides a survey to each cohort so staff can actively identify particular topics they would like more training on; follow-up curricula cover these topics alongside additional required subject matter that help JCOs better contextualize and internalize after spending time in their role. Additionally, TJJD began pairing new staff with veteran employees to strengthen support structures. The agency also reviewed and updated training content to better align with on-the-job expectations while still complying with curriculum requirements set in statute. Within the next year, TJJD plans to develop multiple training tracks so employees can simultaneously receive regular reminders about foundation-level content and learn new skills that build upon the academy's basics.

- **Increased facility leadership interaction with new hires.** The agency has taken steps to increase interactions between newly hired employees and the superintendents who lead, set expectations for, and steer culture change within each facility. All superintendents meet with new hires during initial training in the JCO academy. Additionally, superintendents connect with new staff during formal group meetings and informal facility walkthroughs that occur regularly. Moving forward, the agency aims to standardize these connection opportunities so new staff can develop and maintain a direct link to leadership throughout their TJJD tenure.
- **Instituted increased pay for certain positions.** In addition to recruitment bonuses discussed in the previous subsection, the agency also offers bonuses, on-call pay, and increased compensation for employees who work with more challenging youth populations or during their off-hours. For example, JCOs who work on units that house youth with the highest-level mental health needs, including crisis stabilization, require specialized skills and therefore receive higher pay. Additionally, TJJD implemented a program in 2025 through which any employee could pitch ideas designed to increase safety in TJJD secure facilities; winners received a bonus for their participation, research, and commitment to process improvement. As resources are available, the agency will continue to allocate funding based on risk. The agency requested an update to its biennial funding formula to account for varying youth risks so resources can better address changing youth needs.
- **Implemented agency-wide performance evaluations.** TJJD developed and rolled out an annual performance evaluation process that enables each employee to receive direct feedback on their work. Moving forward, the agency aims to encourage the use of a six-month evaluation schedule and a 360-degree feedback process, where feasible, to make existing procedures more robust, timely, and inclusive.
- **Adopt 30-60-90 expectations for new hires and promoted staff.** To provide support and prioritize goal-setting as early as possible, TJJD implemented requirements for supervisors to set 30-, 60-, and 90-day plans with their new employees or recently promoted staff. As a result, direct reports and supervisors can remain on the same page, identify areas for growth, and work toward agreed-upon outcomes during the initial stages of an employee's new position. The agency will continue using this tool in the upcoming fiscal year and, where appropriate, will direct supervisors to align plans for staff in similar roles.
- **Formalized and refined the JCO career ladder.** Retaining staff requires agency leadership to develop and clarify opportunities for fair advancement through TJJD's ranks. TJJD formalized its JCO career ladder to create a transparent pathway to advancement so employees know what is required to promote and when such opportunities are available. As appropriate, TJJD will make adjustments to the career ladder that align with changing agency initiatives, statutory directives, and improvements in retention outcomes.

- **Continued and expanded supervision training and sustainability.** TJJD has continued to educate and prepare incoming and up-and-coming supervisors at all levels and across all departments of the agency to become effective, communicative, and attentive leaders through its *Strengthening Supervision Training*, a series of professional development sessions that equips supervisors with valuable tools to help build professional, meaningful, intentional, and motivational relationships with their direct reports. The training introduces the simple but powerful principles of setting expectations, holding oneself and others accountable, meeting with direct reports consistently to address work-life needs, preparing for and having the necessary challenging conversations up and down the chain of command to address issues, self-reflecting on and strengthening leadership skills, solving problems together as a team, and avoiding burnout through daily self-care strategies. To ensure these tools and principles were firmly and continuously embedded into the agency supervision culture with fidelity, the staff targeted supervision sustainability efforts with the operations, treatment, and education departments at all five facilities while simultaneously expanding to halfway house, parole, and central office services (such as research and medical) supervisors. With plans to expand this next year to supervisors within the rest of central office services, the supervision sustainability program is currently being rolled out to the next major group in the agency, Agency Operations and Finance.
- **Established mentorship pairings.** Beyond day-to-day supervision, employees in leadership roles have also communicated a need for assistance with and attention on professional development. TJJD's mentorship program uses feedback from supervisors to identify areas of growth for specific employees and match them with other staff who can provide additional support. The program aims to improve cross-agency communication, demonstrate investment in employee needs, and promote a collaborative leadership model that aligns with TJJD's values. Over time, TJJD aims to formalize the program with clear procedures, timelines, and mentor/mentee selection guidelines.
- **Hired staff wellness counselors.** During the 88th Regular Legislative Session, lawmakers provided funding for three staff wellness counselors to support the agency. This team of clinicians addresses both professional and personal stressors that can impact employee morale and contribute to turnover. They offer free, confidential services to all staff members and, when appropriate, connect individuals to longer-term support such as counseling. Recognizing the higher-than-anticipated demand for these services, the agency requested funding to hire three additional counselors; although this request was not approved, the agency proactively reallocated existing resources to create an additional wellness counselor role, strengthening the team's capacity to meet staff needs.
- **Restructured support following serious incidents.** Risks are inherent in secure facilities, which requires TJJD to prioritize formal and consistent support structures for staff, particularly those who are injured on the job. After an incident occurs (such as an assault on staff or an employee's first restraint), TJJD holds debriefings with the staff member, not only to identify areas for improvement but also to check in on the employee's health, questions, and concerns. The staff wellness counselors mentioned in the previous bullet also follow up with staff to provide confidential support, as needed. The debriefing step is essential, as it allows facility leadership to prioritize staff well-being, which improves retention, facility safety, and youth rehabilitation.
- **Developed CARE teams at each facility and at the agency's headquarters.** Agency leadership has tasked each CARE team with creating opportunities to boost employee morale, recognize staff achievements, increase staff resilience, and enhance overall wellness. Since their rollout in fiscal year 2024, the teams have distributed weekly staff recognitions, hosted team-building events, and led staff trainings and other activities focused on health and wellness. The agency will continue to support these teams and review opportunities to incentivize participation in both team membership and events.

- **Prioritized team building within and across teams.** TJJD has implemented various trainings and group activities that stress the importance of authoritative leadership (i.e., leading by example and collaboration to accomplish shared goals) rather than authoritarian leadership (i.e., leading by relying on punishment and demands for compliance without question or flexibility). Similarly, the agency has used research to better understand and communicate about employees' differing workstyles to improve teamwork and morale.

Efforts to Increase Job Clarity, Improve Communication, and Manage Change

- **Aligned the JCO title with its duties.** Under a previous executive director, the agency changed the name of juvenile correctional officers to "youth development coaches." After implementation, however, TJJD found that the change caused confusion among applicants and negatively impacted job clarity. The agency has since reinstated the JCO title and plans to maintain this title moving forward.
- **Updated job descriptions and core competencies.** TJJD's Human Resources staff revamped the development process for job descriptions to minimize gaps between written descriptions and daily expectations. While staff often begin with job description language provided on SAO's website, supervisors are now required to collaborate closely with Human Resources employees to tailor descriptions that best capture the functions and qualifications essential for success at TJJD; this provides clarity to job applicants, direct reports, and supervisors alike. Additionally, TJJD updated all core competencies to incorporate details about roles within the Texas Model. The agency will continue making necessary updates to align with youth needs and risks, statutory changes, and reform progress.
- **Updated function and facility names.** In fiscal year 2024, TJJD changed the name of its school district to the Lone Star School District. The change helps to attract teacher applicants and aims to remove the taint of criminality from youth committed to state care, as directed by statute.²² In fiscal year 2025, the agency updated secure facility names so they are consistent across the state and more clearly aligned with job duties. The facilities are now the Evins, Gainesville, Giddings, Mart, and Ron Jackson State Juvenile Correctional Facilities.
- **Increased staff training on change efforts.** TJJD has expanded training to ensure staff have the tools and common language they need to implement new initiatives. For example, beginning in the spring of 2024, TJJD began providing weekly ongoing training to all JCOs across facilities. TJJD is implementing a quarterly training schedule to formalize continuing education for JCOs each week.
- **Introduced pre- and in-shift briefings for direct care staff.** At TJJD's largest facility (Mart), the agency implemented a system of briefings to ensure staff are up-to-speed on necessary information as shifts change. Campus-wide briefings occur at the beginning of each shift. During this time, outgoing staff provide information to incoming staff on key topics, such as youth behavior, incidents, and activities planned for the next shift. Incoming staff are required to review this information, clarify any uncertainties, and sign a document signaling they are ready to begin their work. The briefings help to reduce confusion, better equip staff for their immediate duties, and improve team collaboration. In October 2024, TJJD rolled out a similar process at all other secure facilities, incorporating changes as needed to accommodate local needs.
- **Expanded town hall opportunities.** Agency and facility leadership hold regular town halls in secure facilities to provide in-person support, answer questions, gather feedback, and communicate next steps on job expectations. Most importantly, town halls offer an opportunity to discuss the "why" behind a change so staff can understand and effectively implement new initiatives. In fiscal year 2025, the agency hosted virtual town halls, creating opportunities to better support staff who work in central office, halfway houses, and parole offices. The agency will continue using town halls to disseminate information and collect feedback.

- **Continued survey distribution to identify issues.** TJJD’s research team continues to conduct youth and staff surveys to identify progress and areas for growth. While some staff surveys incorporate all positions across the agency, others are targeted to help leaders better understand specific team cultures and needs. The agency will continue leveraging its research experts to analyze agency-wide and position-specific concerns that leadership staff may then address.
- **Revised policy development protocols.** The agency has prioritized the simplification of internal policies to focus on the principles of reform efforts, provide greater flexibility to staff on the ground, and cut out unnecessary bureaucracy that causes frustration and fatigue. That way, policy directives will be actionable and trackable. Wherever possible, agency leadership has tasked supervisors with developing protocols that depend on documented processes, rather than individual personalities. TJJD uses the statutorily required rule review process and internal update procedures to analyze, revise, and disseminate policies across the agency, as needed. The agency is currently exploring and actively engaging with other agencies about the use of AI to streamline policy review and development.

Research Next Steps

As the agency implements and expands the strategies listed above, TJJD is working directly with researchers to help leaders better understand staff shortages, develop evidence-based solutions, and reliably measure outcomes. Internal researchers and data experts are actively distributing staff, youth, and customer service surveys while analyzing longitudinal data to act upon emerging trends. However, the small team lacks the capacity to manage large-scale projects essential for breaking the cycle of vacancies, burnout, and turnover.

To ensure forward movement, TJJD entered into a contract with a respected correctional researcher to assist the agency with a variety of tasks. Key goals include: optimizing data collection processes; employing mixed-methods research to assess annual progress toward system goals; and executing a long-term research plan to engage directly with staff regarding their needs, improve employee wellness, protect against known stressors, and analyze the impacts of recruitment and retention initiatives on agency culture. To further strengthen TJJD’s internal research capacity, the research department is working to implement a strategy that empowers staff at all levels to conduct their own research. This approach will enable employees to collaborate on developing localized solutions that align with each facility's culture, context, and resources, with successful innovations being replicated across other facilities as needed.

In parallel, TJJD is in the process of partnering with Texas universities, including Sam Houston State University (SHSU) and Prairie View A&M University (PV A&M), to build external research capacity. These partnerships will support the agency in conducting large-scale, evidence-based research that strengthens practices across the county and state levels of the juvenile justice system. By working with these universities, TJJD will have access to cutting-edge research journals, and additional analytical expertise, and a broader pool of talent. The collaboration is expected to enhance the agency’s ability to develop data-driven solutions, support staff, and improve outcomes for the youth in TJJD’s care and custody. These university partnerships are currently in various stages of implementation, with plans for full integration in the near future.

Relevant Funding Requests

During the 89th Legislative Session, the department requested several exceptional items aimed at improving retention and recruitment. Similar to the previous session, the Legislature made substantial investments in areas critical to increasing staffing strength across the juvenile justice continuum. The agency continues to optimize its existing resources to enhance workforce stability. Looking ahead, agency leaders anticipate future requests in upcoming biennia to further advance successful initiatives in a thoughtful, iterative, and cost-effective manner.

In particular, lawmakers funded the following requests tied to topics discussed throughout this report:

- **Salary increases for TJJD’s direct care staff** (\$16.7M) and UTMB operations (\$1.0M).
- Investments in county-level probation staff, particularly mental health professionals (\$26.8M).
- **Funding for JCO uniforms** (\$0.5M).
- **Targeted education funding.** Increases to support special education teachers, career and technical education instructors, and related technology (\$6.0M).
- **Body scanners at each state facility** and for five major county regions to increase youth safety and medical responses (\$1.4M).
- **Application Modernization** to enhance communications and data collection (\$9.0M).
- **Law Enforcement and Custodial Officer Supplemental Retirement Fund (LECOS)** added the vast majority of employees who work directly with youth to this retirement fund, putting TJJD in line with other comparable agencies, including TDCJ Correctional and Parole Officers.
- **Vehicle Refresh (\$6.4M)** The Comptroller of Public Accounts recommends that agencies evaluate vehicles for replacement once they have been in operation for nine years and reached 100K miles. TJJD received \$5.7M, OIG received \$0.5M, and OIO received \$0.1M for vehicle refresh.
- **PREA Compliance Analyst (\$0.7M)** TJJD received a grant from the Office of the Governor to support PREA-related initiatives within our residential operations. This grant is being used to fund five Compliance Analyst positions. These positions review, monitor, and evaluate agency residential programs through the use of established technology and systematic data, and determine compliance with PREA’s Juvenile Facility Standards and TJJD policies. Since the inception of the positions, the Compliance Analysts have been instrumental in identifying and detecting policy violations by staff and aiding in the prevention of critical incidents within TJJD. The Legislature fully funded this item to maintain analyst positions after the grant’s expiration.
- **Computer Refresh (\$1.6M)** TJJD requested funding to replace outdated laptops, ensuring security and efficiency for staff. The Legislature fully funded this item.
- **Life Safety and Preventative Maintenance (\$5.0M)** TJJD requested funding for critical facility maintenance and safety upgrades. The Legislature fully funded this item.
- **UTMB Nurse Pay (\$0.5M)** TJJD requested funding to align the salaries of UTMB medical personnel with their counterparts in other agencies. The Legislature fully funded this item.

Each of these funding priorities directly ties to **TJJD’s primary focus of safety.**

TJJD's greatest asset is its people. The agency's dedicated employees perform some of the toughest work in the state, always striving to ensure safety for youth, fellow staff members, and Texas communities. During an August 2024 board meeting, Executive Director Shandra Carter acknowledged staff for their ongoing commitment to juvenile justice, noting:

We have talented, compassionate, and innovative people working at this agency who are relentlessly committed to rehabilitating youth and keeping our communities safe. Despite what feels like endless scrutiny and criticism, they do not waver and stay focused on their mission. I am personally grateful for these folks and very proud of the team I lead.

Moving forward, the agency anticipates staffing strength will remain the most critical issue impacting workplace culture, facility operations, and system outcomes. TJJD is committed to working directly with the Legislature, county partners, and other stakeholders to address workforce issues in innovative ways. As the agency collects additional data on the impacts of its initiatives, staff will share insights with state leaders to further progress.