



Presentation to the State of Rhode Island House of Representatives Committee on Oversight

Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families

January 23, 2024

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- 03** Timeline of DCYF Engagement
- 04** Response to Report by the Office of the Child Advocate
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St. Mary's Home for Children

Background

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St. Mary's Home for Children

- St. Mary's is a private, non-profit agency that cares for children facing challenges such as psychiatric illness, sexual abuse and trafficking, and special education needs. Their three program areas are as follows:
 - **Residential Services:** five houses on the North Providence, RI campus for children ages 6-18 with individual, group, and family clinical services.
 - Horton, Hope, and Mauran Houses: Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities (PRTFs)
 - Harding House: Acute Residential Treatment Service (ARTS); hospital step-down or diversion program
 - Hills House: emergency assessment and stabilization services
 - **Outpatient Services:** mental health programming for children, adults, and families impacted by sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, and other trauma.
 - **The George N. Hunt Campus School:** enrolls children placed at St. Mary's for residential treatment and from communities throughout the state; provides special education instruction and therapeutic services for K-12 students.

St. Mary's Home for Children

Residential Services are critical for youth who have some of the most acute needs.

- Provides residential treatment services for adolescent youth and girls.
- Also accepts youth not involved with DCYF who require stabilization following a psychiatric hospitalization.
- Helps reduce the number of youth in psychiatric hospitals and out-of-state residential placements.
- Is a crucial partner in helping address the immediate and long-term needs of Rhode Island's most vulnerable youth.
 - Partnership is through contracts and compliance with Medicaid certification standards.

Roles of Key DCYF Divisions

Role: Division of Licensing and Regulation

General:

- Monitor and enforce regulations for foster homes, residential facilities, and child-placement agencies through various points of contact, including site visits.
 - Visits to in-state residential facilities occur at least once per quarter; performed by an assigned social caseworker.
- Reviews all calls to the Child Abuse Hotline that do not rise to the level of requiring an abuse/neglect investigation.

Specific to St. Mary's:

- Increased frequency of general site visits to 1-2 times per week.
 - Additional, more in-depth visits/inspections conducted at least weekly (planned and unannounced); extensive feedback provided after each.
- Completed comprehensive assessment, identifying areas of concern and providing specific recommendations.
- Engaging in intensive monitoring, corrective action planning, and meetings with external community partners.

Role: Division of Community Services Behavioral Health (CSBH)

General:

- Sends referrals to congregate care and home-based programs; coordinates intakes with other DCYF divisions.
- Assesses whether a youth continues to require services and identify barriers to discharge.
- Regularly reviews program treatment documentation for quality assurance purposes.
- Coordinates with DCYF Contracts & Compliance to develop new services.
- Engages in statewide behavioral health planning with EOHHS, BHDDH, and other state partners.

Specific to St. Mary's:

- CSBH clinical social workers:
 - Meet repeatedly with clinical and direct care staff at St. Mary's to discuss concerns and provide technical assistance.
 - Assist in monitoring St. Mary's for compliance with federal PRTF standards.

Role: DCYF Division of Child Protective Services (CPS)

General:

- Answers and evaluates all calls to the Child Abuse Hotline; determines whether an investigation is required.
 - If an investigation is required, CPS investigators conduct them; the allegation of child abuse or neglect will be either "indicated" or "unfounded."
- DCYF's Division of Licensing and the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) are automatically informed of all CPS investigations through DCYF's electronic case management system, the Rhode Island Children's Information System (RICHIST).

Specific to St. Mary's:

- Data for 2023:
 - Investigations – 69
 - Indicated investigations – 22
 - Screen Outs – 146

Timeline of DCYF Engagement

Timeline of DCYF Engagement

- **May 18, 2023:** 30-day hold on new intakes and referrals to St. Mary's.
- **May 2023 – June 2023:** Instituted intensive monitoring strategies; conducted a comprehensive assessment.
- **June 14, 2023:** Assessment's initial findings provided to St. Mary's.
- **June 20, 2023:** DCYF/St. Mary's meeting on initial findings, corrective action planning, and intensive monitoring.
- **June 26, 2023:** PRTF Care and Treatment Review completed by DCYF.
- **June 30, 2023:** Initial Corrective Action Plan (CAP) submitted by St. Mary's to DCYF.
- **July 3, 2023:** Complete results of the assessment and PRTF Care and Treatment Review provided to St. Mary's in a Programming Summary; intake hold lifted.
- **July 10, 2023:** Probationary Licenses provided to St. Mary's.
- **July 12, 2023:** DCYF notified Chief Judge Forte, the OCA, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) that intake hold was lifted; provided Programming Summary.
- **July 14, 2023:** Updated CAP submitted by St. Mary's to DCYF.

Timeline of DCYF Engagement

- **August 2023:** St. Mary's selected outside consultant to conduct program review (William Martone).
- **August 11, 2023:** First monthly meeting – DCYF, St. Mary's, North Providence Police Department (NPPD), and OCA.
- **September 6, 2023:** DCYF/St. Mary's meeting regarding recently identified safety concerns.
- **September 12, 2023:** Director Deckert updated Family Court, OCA, and CASA regarding progress at St. Mary's.
- **September 18, 2023:** DCYF/St. Mary's meeting regarding ongoing safety and licensing concerns.
- **September 27-28, 2023:** PRTF Care and Treatment Review completed by DCYF.
- **October 2, 2023:** Director Deckert updated Family Court, OCA, and CASA regarding progress at St. Mary's.
- **October 3, 2023:** Renewed St. Mary's probationary status for 30 days; informed St. Mary's.
- **October 27, 2023:** Provided results of PRTF Care and Treatment Review to St. Mary's.
- **November 1, 2023:** Consultant Martone submitted the results of his assessment to St. Mary's.
- **November 30, 2023:** New intake hold.

Timeline of DCYF Engagement

- **December 1, 2023:** DCYF issued a response to Mr. Martone's report, critical of aspects of his assessment.
- **December 4, 2023:** Chief Judge Forte, OCA, and CASA notified of the new intake hold placed on St. Mary's.
- **December 6, 2023:** Secretary Charest, Director Deckert, and OCA met with the St. Mary's Board of Directors.
- **December 7, 2023:** PRTF Care and Treatment Review completed by DCYF.
- **December 11, 2023:** DCYF/St. Mary's meeting to review conditions for lifting intake hold.
- **December 12, 2023:** Internal DCYF meeting regarding needs, treatment, and discharge plans for youth St. Mary's.
- **December 20, 2023:** DCYF/OCA discussed findings of OCA's report.
- **January 9, 2024:** DCYF/OCA meeting to clarify some recommendations in OCA's report.
- **January 12, 2024:** Introductory meeting – DCYF/St. Mary's interim CEO and executive leadership team.
- **January 17, 2024:** Meeting between Governor McKee, Secretary Charest, Director Deckert, St. Mary's Board Chair Bishop Knisely, and interim CEO Dr. Montorio-Archer to discuss changes to the St. Mary's Board of Directors' governance structure.

Timeline of DCYF Engagement

Currently, the general cadence of DCYF engagement is as follows:

- Division of Licensing:
 - Staff reviews each residential unit at St. Mary's at least twice per week; reviews include a site visit.
- Division of CSBH:
 - Clinical social workers observe designated units twice per week to discuss care and treatment of youth.
 - Social caseworkers visit youth on their caseload weekly.
- Division of Family Services:
 - Social caseworkers visit youth on their caseload weekly.

Divisions coordinate on-site visits to ensure that DCYF staff is on the St. Mary's campus most days every week, including after hours and weekends.

Response to Report from the Office of the Child Advocate

Response to Report from the Office of the Child Advocate

Commitment to Improving Rhode Island's Child and Family Well-Being System

- Of the 31 recommendations specific to DCYF:
 - 13 had previously been identified by DCYF as areas to improve; changes already implemented or in progress.
 - 14 are accepted by DCYF; workplans to implement those changes are being developed.
 - 4 DCYF identified as requiring further discussion.
- DCYF is developing a report on the implementation status of the recommendations to provide to OCA, Family Court, and the legislature.

Next Steps and Priority Goals

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DCYF will lift the current intake hold when St. Mary's achieves the following:

1. Completes a **1-month period** with no safety-related licensing violations.
2. Identifies a **residential care and treatment model** and takes steps to begin executing it, campus-wide.
3. Implements an ongoing, **comprehensive training curriculum** for staff regarding behavioral health conditions and appropriate care for youth in need of PRTF-level care.
4. Improves **management practices**, facility-wide, focusing on enhanced communication among and between all levels of staff.

Next Steps and Priority Goals

Expanding Rhode Island's PRTF capacity through St. Mary's

- Plan to construct new buildings on the St. Mary's campus that will create 12 additional PRTF beds.
 - Progress slowed due to soil contamination; ground-breaking to begin construction is expected in March 2024.
- St. Mary's and DCYF meet twice per month regarding project status.
- Expected completion date: March 2025.

Next Steps and Priority Goals

DCYF to Initiate Residential Monitoring Unit

- New unit within DCYF to include an administrator, supervisors, and staff who are “monitors” engaged in:
 - Regular site visits at all residential facilities where DCYF youth are placed; scheduled and unannounced, as frequently as weekly.
 - Monthly on- and off-site reviews of a sample of case files.
 - Youth clinical record, treatment provided, reporting fidelity, personnel files.
 - Data reviews to identify risks, trends, and outcomes.
- Positions will be reallocated from existing DCYF vacancies.
- Activities for monitoring are distinguishable from those related to licensing.
- Work with community partners, including OCA, contracted providers, Family Court, and higher education to develop a unit framework.

Appendix

Presentation documents provided:

- Letter dated May 18, 2023, placing intake hold.
- St. Mary's Residential Programming Summary, June 2023.
- Letter dated October 23, 2023, PRTF Care & Treatment Review.
- Consultant's Report, WPM Consulting, dated November 1, 2023.
- Letter dated November 29, 2023, requesting to meet with the St. Mary's Board of Directors.
- Letter dated November 30, 2023, placing intake hold.
- Letter dated December 1, 2023, DCYF response to Consultant's Report.

Discussion

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