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County Executive

# PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

## OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

### MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** March 28, 2024

**TO:** Josh Hamlin  
Director of Budget and Policy Analysis Division

**THRU:** Stanley A. Earley Director *SAE*  
Office of Management and Budget

**FROM:** The Honorable DaNeeka Varner Cotton  
County Administrative Judge  
Circuit Court for Prince George's County

**RE:** Second Round FY 2025 Proposed Budget Responses

*In an effort to facilitate an efficient and effective budget review and reporting process, we are submitting a request for budgetary information. Please respond to the questions and complete the following tables with the appropriate information. In some cases, we have populated the tables with available known data. In instances where the tables need to be re-sized or modified to accommodate additional information, please feel free to do so.*

1. Has the Court experienced an increase in dockets relating to Youth Violence and Crime? What have been the operating challenges as a result of this?

**Yes. The Court has experienced an increase in cases concerning youth violence, crime, and drug use. Consequently, the Court's Problem-Solving Courts introduced the Gun Possession Program. The attached charts demonstrate that, over the last year, the Problem-Solving Courts' juvenile initiatives, particularly the Juvenile Drug Court and the Gun Possession Program, have experienced an increase in participants.**

**The operating challenges are the lack of necessary staff (case managers) to manage and provide adequate and intensive supervision to the youth in our programs.**

**The Prince George's Circuit Court has launched two initiatives to tackle Youth Violence and Crime. The first program, New Direction Youth Diversion, was established on March 29, 2021. The second, the Juvenile Gun Possession Program, commenced on February 27, 2023.**

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**The New Direction Youth Diversion Program allows youth to enter and complete a structured community-based program as an alternative to formal involvement within the Criminal Justice System (Phase I-DJS Referrals). The program also provides supportive services to Prince George’s County Public Schools, where we receive referrals from Pupil Personnel Workers for those students who may need some assistance (Phase II-Community). Services provided include weekly supervision/monitoring at assigned school, GED Services via Problem Solving Courts Classroom, tutoring/mentoring services, participation in weekly or random urinalysis, referral to weekly group/individual substance use treatment/mental health sessions (as deemed appropriate), completion of a drug education assignment for presentation, monthly non- adversarial Judicial review and creation and presentation of participant’s vision board.**

**The Gun Possession Program is an intensive supervision, incentive/sanction-based program with a comprehensive curriculum for a first-time gun possession offender. Participants are required to attend biweekly court hearings, take part in weekly supervision meetings with a case manager, submit to random drug testing, participate in educational/GED services, complete and present a vision board, and all are to partake in mental health services and substance use treatment as required by the program. The program curriculum focuses on various subjects, including anger management, conflict resolution, developing coping skills, emotional regulation, strengthening family systems, and functioning, to name a few. The program is designed to be completed within six months and progression in the program is contingent upon a participant’s completion of specific requirements. Participants are assigned a case manager who will assist them with reaching programmatic and life goals, as well as meet all probationary requirements.**

**Please see Attachment A.**

2. To what extent does the Court serve residents with behavioral health concerns in the Judicial system?

**The Family Justice Center and Problem-Solving Courts offer programs and services designed to address behavioral health issues within the Judicial system.**

### **Problem-Solving Courts (PSC)**

**Problem-Solving Courts can refer their participants to mental health providers for initial psychological and psychiatric evaluations and follow-up therapeutic and medication management services as indicated. However, sometimes, a referral can be made for services for a resident assessed by a Problem-Solving Court. Still, some diagnoses require a higher level of care than a PSC can provide for the successful completion of a court-ordered program.**

### **Family Justice Center (FJC)**

**Over the past two years, the Prince George’s County Family Justice has experienced a 200% increase in the number of survivors seeking assistance for mental health services. This is largely a latent outcome of the pandemic during which time survivors were isolated in their homes with abusive partners and unable access vital support systems. Additionally, domestic abuse incidents have recently been much more dangerous, many involving handguns and non-fatal strangulations resulting in an increased level of danger and trauma, thereby warranting the need for therapeutic services.**

**To that end, the FJC has been very proactive in its efforts to identify and address client’s mental health needs. During intake, FJC Program Advocates conduct depression screenings as a standard service protocol to assess the status of client’s mental health and emotional well-being. The screening tool is comprised of a standard set of 15 questions that help determine whether the survivor is experiencing depression. The test provides a numeric value associated with the respective level of depression, which ranges from zero to mild to very high. If the survivor’s score is high, they are automatically referred to the onsite therapist for trauma therapy and or mental health services. Of note, mental health services are offered to all clients during intake as one of the many resources made available in the FJC, regarding of their depression test scores.**

- a. What challenges does the Court experience in serving the needs of this County?

**Problem-Solving Courts often have higher success rates with participants with stable housing within the county. However, housing services have been difficult to retain for participants or individuals who may be referred to a Problem-Solving Court. Additionally, bus transportation service throughout the county has been a significant hardship as the routes through the county often take residents several hours to get to and from needed resources and or court-ordered services.**

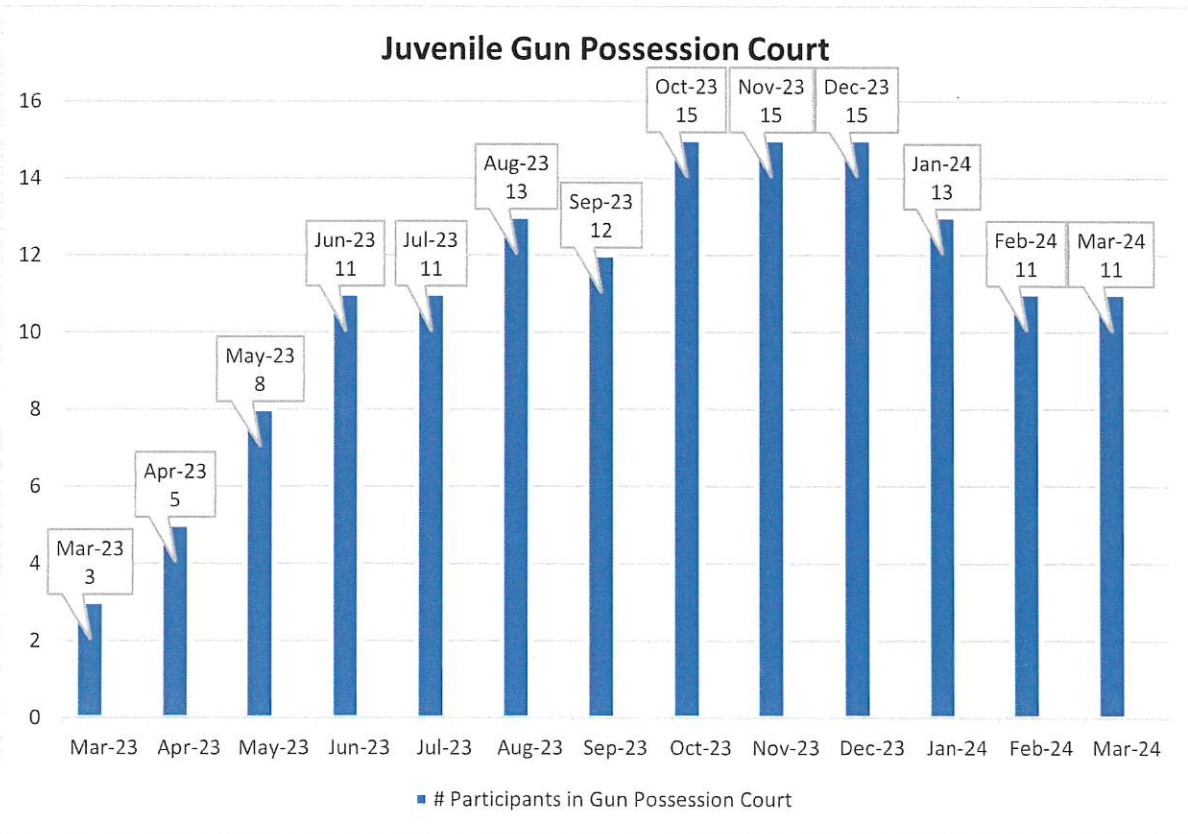
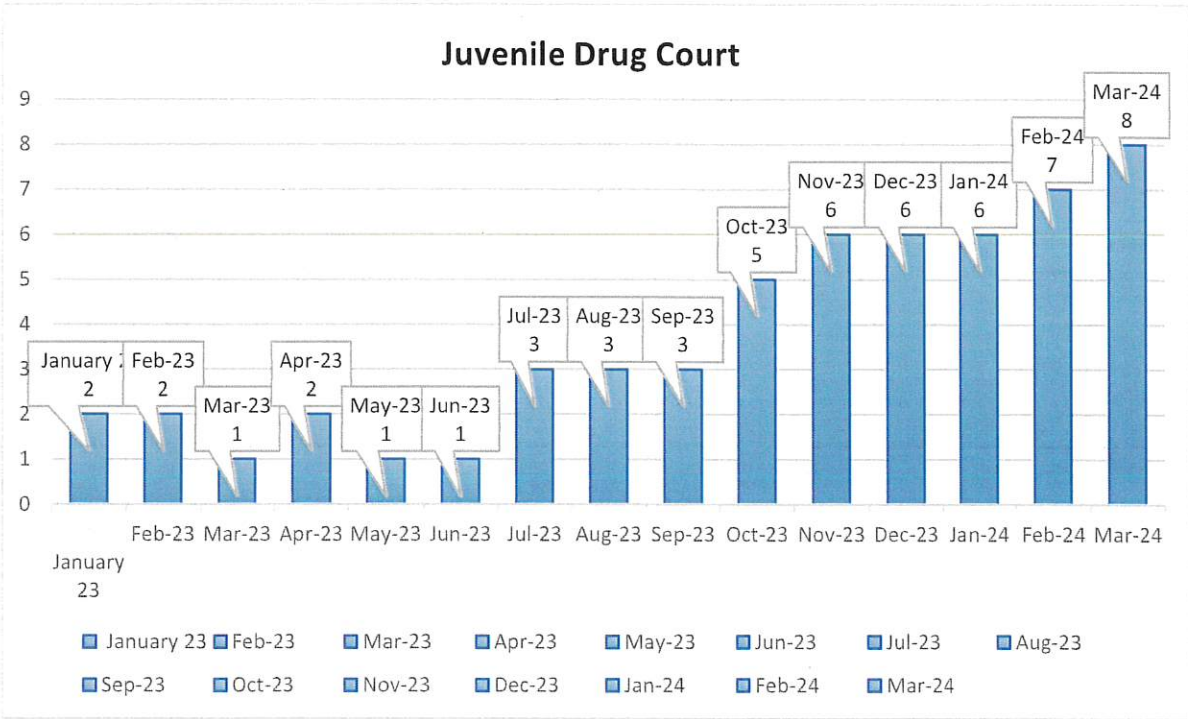
- b. Are there specialty services or programs aimed at addressing the needs of residents with behavioral concerns?

**The Problem-Solving Courts were created on the premise of assisting residents with specific behavioral concerns that may have been the primary causation of an individual to end up in the justice system. Some examples include substance use disorder, mental health needs, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, and re-enter services as one transition from the prison system.**

- c. Please confirm that the list of non-profit and other community-based organizations the Court partners with from the First Round Responses is complete.

**The list of non-profit and other community-based organizations is complete.**

## Attachment A – Question 1 – Number of Participants in Programs



### New Direction Diversion

