

Agency Name	Sununu Youth Services Center
Audit Name	Performance Audit
Audit Period	SFY 2016 -2020
Status Report Date	March 25, 2022

Completion Status:	
Unresolved	1
Partially	0
Substantially	3
Fully	6
Total Action Items	10

Summary of Audit Observations/Findings					
Number	Observation Title	Status [place X in status column]			
		Unresolved	Partially Resolved	Substantially Resolved	Fully Resolved
1	Reevaluate Criteria For Release From The SYSC	X			
2	Provide Evidence-based Treatment Programming			X	
3	Mental Health Assessment Should Be Evidence-based			X	
4	Define Individual Therapy and Family Counseling and the Requirements to Provide Them				X
5	Define Objectives and Develop a Strategic Plan				X
6	Institute Comprehensive Performance Measurement			X	
7	Organizational Structure Should Be Reviewed				X
8	Conduct a Formal Staffing Analysis and Develop a Written Staffing Plan				X
9	Make Efforts to Minimize Staff Turnover				X
10	Keep Parent and Youth Handbook Update-to-date				X

Observation 1: Reevaluate Criteria For Release From the SYSC

Summary of Finding: We recommend the Legislature consider amending and harmonizing statutes regarding release of juveniles from the SYSC to eliminate contradiction; and allowing the JPB to consider factors such as participation in the SYSC Programming, progress towards treatment goals, a decreased likelihood that the juvenile will reoffend, and the best interests of the juvenile and the public.

Current Status: This observation is unresolved.

Observation 2: Provide Evidence-based Treatment Programming

Summary of Finding: We recommend that SYSC continue with the review of clinical programming, ensure programming selected is evidence-based, review programming annually, and review the use of trained psychological associates and Youth Counselors to administer clinical treatment programs. With an annual review of programming in accordance with policy.

Current Status: This observation is substantially resolved. SYSC management in collaboration with the SYSC Psychologist have researched various evidence-based treatment programs and the cost of the programs to support positive outcomes for youth. As we continue to progress through the legislative process on the future state of SYSC and the budgetary needs, SYSC has completed the research to support EBP for the youth at SYSC. This has been further enhanced: 1) by the report issued in September 2021 by the Department with the assistance of Alvarez and Marcel containing recommendations for transitioning to a smaller, architecturally secured, therapeutically driven secure treatment program for youth, and 2) by the observations of a team of DHHS staff and a member of the Legislative Committee to Develop a Plan for the Closure and Replacement of the Sununu Youth Services Center on visits to other jurisdictions to observe their programs and models. These efforts have helped confirm our intent to implement Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) for all youth as well as:

- Mindfulness-Based Substance Abuse Treatment for Adolescents: A 12 Session Curriculum. This program is an evidence-based program for substance abuse treatment with adolescents.
- ARISE Life Skills Program. The ARISE life skills program is evidence-based and designed to help youth deal with the events and challenges of everyday life. After participating in the ARISE life skills groups youth acquire a new sense of well-being, they are engaged in learning and motivated to make positive changes in their lives.
- ARISE Anger Management Program: Evidence-based program helps teens and young adults learn behavioral skills that alert them to: the physical signs that indicate anger is rising, the emotional signs their anger level is going up, and the stressors that trigger anger.
- Trauma Affect Regulation: Guide for Education and Therapy (TARGET). TARGET was developed by Julian Ford, PhD, out of the University of Connecticut and is a trauma informed approach that has been successfully implemented into various juvenile detention centers. Research has demonstrated reduced recidivism rates for detained youth receiving the intervention for even just two weeks.

Implantation of PBIS is underway; however, implementation of the other models will require clarity on the future of the facility, staffing resources, and programing resources as we transition from the current facility.

Observation 3: Mental Health Assessment Should Be Evidenced-based

Summary of Finding: We recommend SYSC replace the *Mental Health Assessment* form with an assessment that is evidence-based and supported by research establishing its reliability and validity for use in a juvenile corrections setting.

Current Status: This observation is substantially resolved. SYSC has determined to move forward with the MAYSI-2 as the selected mental health assessment tool. The MAYSI-2 is a brief behavioral health screening tool designed especially for juvenile justice programs and facilities. It will identify 12 through 17 year old who may have important, pressing behavioral health/mental health needs. Its primary use is in juvenile probation, diversion programs and intake in juvenile detention and corrections. Because it is relatively inexpensive, SYSC can implement the tool without any additional appropriations. Clinical staff are using a paper version of the tool now; however, finalization of the full tool is pending review and approval of IT security and contracting.

Observation 4: Define Individual Therapy and Family Counseling and the Requirements To Provide Them

Summary of Finding: We recommend SYSC clarify the policy on individual therapy and family counseling by stating whether the policy establishes a requirement to provide a minimum number of services to committed juveniles; define services and contacts between juveniles, families, and clinical staff that satisfy the provision of individual therapy and family counseling; and define all services identified in the clinical notes.

Current Status: This observation is fully resolved. A workgroup was developed to review relevant policies and processes. SYSC policies for expectations of timeframes and minimum number of services provided to youth states the minimum requirements. SYSC Psychologist has developed definitions for clinical services for all clinical staff to understand and follow in relation to individual and family therapy. To pull the documentation together with the expected definitions, all fields within the computerized system have been updated and standardized to support consistency and tracking.

Observation 5: Define Objectives and Develop a Strategic Plan

Summary of Finding: We recommend SYSC management engage in a strategic planning process to define the SYSC's objectives and to detail how those objectives will be achieved and measured. The Department of Health and Human Services and SYSC management may wish to work with stakeholders and the

Legislature to clarify the SYSC's mission and purpose in response to the changes to the SYSC population and release requirements.

Current Status: This observation is fully resolved. DCYF has issued its strategic priorities for SFY22 & 23 which are inclusive of priorities for SYSC, namely priorities have been identified regarding workforce stabilization, the closure of SYSC, and its replacement with an architecturally secure, therapeutically driven secured treatment facility for youth. Additionally, in September of 2021 the Department released its recommendations for the development/transition to a new architecturally secure, therapeutically driven secured treatment facility for youth; implementation of those recommendations requires final authorization from the legislature.

Observation 6: Institute Comprehensive Performance Measurement

Summary of Finding: We recommend once SYSC complete a comprehensive strategic plan that identifies goals and objectives, SYSC choose performance measures based on attainable data which can be used to determine the organization's achievement of its goals and objectives.

Current Status: This observation is substantially resolved. As referenced in the response to Observation 5, the biannual DCYF Strategic Priorities has been completed and contains performance metrics related to SYSC and the broader child and family serving system. Additional metrics will need be identified when final decisions are made as to future physical, staffing, and treatment model of the facility.

Observation 7: Organizational Structure Should Be Reviewed

Summary of Finding: We recommend SYSC Management conduct a formal organizational review of the SYSC structure and its span of control. If the review identifies needs, the SYSC should request the necessary resources and statutory changes from the Legislature.

Current Status: This observation is fully resolved. In September of 2021, the Department released its recommendations for the development/transition to a new architecturally secure, therapeutically driven secured treatment facility for youth; implementation of those recommendations requires final authorization from the legislature. That plan includes a restructured staffing model and pattern to be established with the new facility. Some aspects of that plan have been implemented in line with the appropriations in the SFY22/23 budget; other aspects will begin to be implemented over the coming year in anticipation of transitioning to a smaller facility.

Observation 8: Conduct a Formal Staffing Analysis and Develop a Written Staffing Plan

Summary of Finding: We recommend SYSC conduct a staffing analysis; develop, document, and implement a staffing plan in accordance with PREA and its staffing policy and review on at least an annual basis.

Current Status: This observation is fully resolved as referenced in Observation 8. In September of 2021, the Department released its recommendations for the development/transition to a new architecturally secure, therapeutically driven secured treatment facility for youth; implementation of those recommendations requires final authorization from the legislature. That plan includes a restructured staffing model and pattern to be established with the new facility. Some aspects of that plan have been implemented in line with the appropriations in the SFY22/23 budget; other aspects will begin to be implemented over the coming year in anticipation of transitioning to a smaller facility.

In addition, in February 2022, the facility drafted and implemented a staffing plan to monitor and maintain Prison Rape Elimination Act standards.

Observation 9: Make Efforts to Minimize Staff Turnover

Summary of Finding: We recommend the SYSC administration as part of its strategic planning process, consider the need for a structured, strategic workforce plan, to include retention programs with quantifiable goals and objectives, determine the reasons staff leave the SYSC, and design tools to meet retention goals and objectives. The SYSC should consider and investigate the extent to which issues such as job satisfaction, staff perceptions of supervision, inadequate training, high stress and low morale contribute to the staff turn-over.

Current Status: This observation is resolved.

The entire leadership team at SYSC has completed the leadership training referenced in the audit report and has identified goals and objectives to support the transformation of juvenile justice and the treatment needs of youth served, as well as a mission statement.

As referenced in the audit report, the SYSC has already begun efforts to improve staff morale, including a partnership with the EAP program and increasing utilization of the DCYF EPIC Peer Support Program. DCYF's clinical staff support specialist is now holding regular office hours at the facility to better support staff well-being, and has engaged support from an organizational psychologist. The psychologist spent time in the facility working with staff beginning in March 2022 and included staff from the Employee Assistance Program and DCYF's clinical specialist in order to help sustain practices.

Lastly, DCYF received approval from the joint fiscal committee and G&C to implement a staffing contract to provide temporary Youth Counselors with an option to hire permanently and authorization for a salary enhancement for Youth Counselors as current starting salaries are no longer commensurate with the market making recruitment and retention very difficult. These efforts have led to greater staff stability than the facility has experienced in years.

Observation 10: Keep Parent and Youth Handbook Update-to-date

Summary of Finding: We recommend SYSC management update the *Parent and Youth Handbook* to reflect current services and institute procedures to continuously keep it up-to-date.

Current Status: This observation is fully resolved. The Parent and Youth Handbook and the Youth Handbook have been completed.