



King County



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE




APRIL 6, 2026

Second Follow-up on CCFJC Conditions

The Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DAJD) has completed an analysis that may help improve the experience and outcomes for youth detained at the Clark Children and Family Justice Center (CCFJC). To better understand gaps in its support structure, DAJD gathered input from its staff, from partners across King County, and the Washington Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), and interviewed youth currently in secure detention at CCFJC. These conversations highlighted several opportunities to bolster services provided to youth at CCFJC. To ensure that services are not curtailed, DAJD has worked to increase the staffing levels of its juvenile detention officers (JDO). While not all CCFJC vacancies have been filled, DAJD leadership has already noted positive outcomes that are partially a result of the increased number of JDOs it has hired, such as youth spending far fewer days confined to their cells in early 2025 than in prior years.

DAJD should continue its efforts to develop and document a plan to address the service gaps outlined in its needs analysis. After identifying service gaps during its needs analysis for the youth in secure detention, DAJD began working with Superior Court, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office (PAO), and the Department of Public Defense (DPD) to develop plans to provide for youth's programmatic needs. CCFJC leaders also met with staff from DCYF to better understand how services provided at long-term youth facilities compare to services available at CCFJC. While DAJD has taken early steps, DAJD acknowledges that much work remains to determine what programs are appropriate and feasible to provide at CCFJC, and to what extent services can be differentiated for youth with varying lengths of stay.

Of the seven remaining audit recommendations:

 4 DONE	 3 PROGRESS	 0 OPEN
FULLY IMPLEMENTED Auditor will no longer monitor.	PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED Auditor will continue to monitor.	REMAIN UNRESOLVED Auditor will continue to monitor.

See details below for implementation status of each recommendation.

Recommendation 1

DONE



The King County Executive and the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention should conduct an analysis of the needs of youth who are securely detained in the Patricia H. Clark Children and Family Justice Center. The analysis should consider and document:

- **actual lengths of stay experienced by youth in the facility**
- **age-appropriate therapeutic and skill needs of youth detained for extended periods**
- **how services could be differentiated for longer lengths of stay.**

STATUS UPDATE: DAJD has completed an analysis of the needs of the youth in its care. As part of this assessment, DAJD reviewed leading practices published in peer-reviewed sources from across state and local jurisdictions. DAJD coupled the literature review with interviews of DAJD employees and youth housed at CCFJC, with a particular focus on interviewing youth who have experienced longer stays at CCFJC and interviewing staff who have experience working with youth experiencing longer stays. DAJD leadership also spoke with its partners in King County Juvenile Court Services, the PAO, the DPD, and staff with DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation. Finally, DAJD leadership spoke with community-based organizations that provide mental and psychiatric services to youth in detention. Through its conversations with people who understand the circumstances and needs of the youth in secure detention, DAJD leadership found that there was generally agreement around a few core challenges which outline DAJD's planned future efforts: significant unmet mental health needs, difficulty with educational attainment, and a need for longer-term vocation and job skills that will assist youth with successful reentry into the community.

IMPACT: By completing a needs analysis for the youth in its care, DAJD is better positioned to meet the mental and behavioral needs of the youth in its care. DAJD leadership noted that they will build upon the findings from this needs analysis as they work to address the remaining audit recommendations.

Recommendation 2

PROGRESS



Based on the results of the analysis in Recommendation 1, the King County Executive and the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention should document and implement a plan to address gaps between the programs and services that securely detained youth need and those that are being provided.

In partnership with Superior Court, the Prosecuting Attorney's Office and the Department of Public Defense, the plan could include:

- **options for specific programs or services for securely detained youth**
- **identification of physical improvements to the Patricia H. Clark Children and Family Justice Center**
- **identification of placement alternatives to CCFJC secure detention, including placement in a Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families-operated facility and other alternatives**
- **documentation of alignment with the actions included in the January 2024 Care and Closure Final Strategic Planning Report on the Future of Secure Juvenile Detention.**

STATUS UPDATE: DAJD leadership noted that it is building upon the needs analysis completed in response to Recommendation 1, above, to identify areas where continued collaboration with the PAO, Superior Court, and DPD will help to address gaps in programs and services for youth in secure detention. DAJD has already taken steps to address some of the gaps observed both in the original audit and over the course of DAJD's needs analysis. For example, DAJD has expanded the programs provided to youth and, at the same time, bolstered feedback mechanisms for programs to ensure that the programs are meeting the needs of the youth at CCFJC. CCFJC has also piloted programs that provide greater familial support for the youth in its care, such as a family meal initiative which allows youth to invite family members to share a meal during visitation. DAJD leadership acknowledges that work remains to address the remaining gaps and intends to explore additional improvements, including regular training opportunities for staff that create a sustained professional development effort, methods to incorporate more therapeutic furnishings, methods to provide youth in secure detention with access to green space and direct sunlight, and an expansion of youth vocational opportunities and peer support programs. CCFJC leaders also met with staff from DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation to better understand how services provided at long-term youth facilities compare to services available at CCFJC. Through these efforts, DAJD leaders seek to better understand the range of services currently provided at secure detention facilities, what is appropriate and feasible to provide at CCFJC, and the extent to which services can be differentiated between youth with short stays and those with longer stays. DAJD anticipates issuing a report detailing these considerations later in 2026.

WHAT REMAINS: To ensure that youth in secure detention receive services and programs that are responsive to longer lengths of stay, the County Executive and DAJD should continue working with Superior Court, PAO, and DPD to develop, document, and implement a plan to address the gaps in the programs and services that secure-detained youth receive.

Recommendation 3

APRIL 01, 2025

DONE



Recommendation 4

DONE



The Juvenile Division of the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention should explore options to house youth facing adult charges separately from youth under age 16 charged solely with juvenile offenses and document how to incorporate this in its housing classification system.

STATUS UPDATE: DAJD has updated its classification methodology to better align with best practices. DAJD's classification methodology now includes consideration of the youth's age, their stage of development, and the assessed level of need. While DAJD's new approach does not consider whether the youth is charged with juvenile offenses or adult offenses, it does consider the estimated length of stay. In total, DAJD now places youth in housing units based on their age, maturity, and the time spent in custody, as these factors may more accurately inform whether the youth will have similar developmental and programmatic needs while at CCFJC.

IMPACT: By updating its housing classification methodology to include consideration of the youth's age, anticipated length of stay, and developmental needs, DAJD has better aligned its process with best practices. DAJD has noted that early data reviewed since this shift in classification approach indicates a positive impact on youth behavior and facility safety.

Recommendation 5

APRIL 01, 2025

DONE



Recommendation 6

PROGRESS



The Juvenile Division of the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention should develop, document, and communicate a plan that defines the appropriate level of staffing to meet the needs of youth in secure detention. The staffing plan should be informed by the needs assessment developed in response to Recommendation 1 and, in turn, should inform ongoing and future recruitment efforts.

At a minimum, the plan should account for the number and types of staff needed to ensure that:

- **youth do not spend time confined in their cells due to staffing limitations**
- **school periods are not missed nor shortened**
- **mental health services can be provided effectively**
- **enrichment activities can be provided consistently.**

STATUS UPDATE: In the previous follow up period, DAJD worked with the Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget to increase its total budgeted positions to add 13 JDOs. Throughout 2025, DAJD worked to fill its vacancies and has continued these efforts into 2026. DAJD notes that, to date, it has filled 91 of its 103 authorized positions. DAJD leadership shared that it has already experienced positive improvements, partially from the increased staffing, such as youth spending far fewer days confined to their cells in early 2025 than in prior years, as shown in an [2025 Independent Monitor report](#). As DAJD works to build upon the findings from the needs analysis completed in response to Recommendations 1 and 2, above, DAJD may identify additional programs or services required to meet the needs of youth in secure detention. This may, in turn, inform staffing needs and related recruitment and hiring efforts.

WHAT REMAINS: To ensure that youth receive enrichment and educational services consistently, DAJD should use the needs analysis completed in response to Recommendation 1 to inform ongoing and future recruitment efforts, with the aim to achieve adequate staffing to ensure that youth services and programs are not curtailed.

Recommendation 7

DONE



To highlight positive performance and identify areas for growth, the Juvenile Division of the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention should regularly conduct performance evaluations for juvenile detention officers at all levels.

STATUS UPDATE: DAJD has implemented performance appraisals for JDOs and corrections supervisors. As part of the appraisals, supervisory staff highlight areas for improvement and also acknowledge where a staff member is exceptionally skilled or talented. Supervisory staff also recognize accomplishments a staff member has achieved during the review period. Together, the evaluation system DAJD has implemented provides detention staff with guidance on areas for growth while also noting positive performance and future career opportunities.

IMPACT: By implementing performance appraisals for all staff, DAJD increased the opportunities for staff to receive positive feedback, acknowledge accomplishments, identify areas for improvement, and help staff to identify and work toward career goals.

Recommendation 8**PROGRESS**

The Juvenile Division of the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention should develop and implement a policy to test water quality at the CCFJC at least annually.

STATUS UPDATE: DAJD collaborated with the Facility Management Division (FMD) to conduct a water quality test in April of 2025. The water quality test showed no contaminants exceeding maximum contaminant levels established by the Environmental Protection Agency under the National Primary Drinking Water Regulations. DAJD and FMD agreed to a regular water testing plan with testing to occur annually in January, however, a test has not yet been completed in 2026 due to leadership changes within DAJD and FMD. DAJD leadership is working with FMD staff to conduct a 2026 water quality test in the near future.

WHAT REMAINS: DAJD should continue communicating with FMD to ensure that a water quality test occurs as soon as possible and that the annual testing plan continues moving forward.

Recommendation 9

APRIL 01, 2025

DONE**Recommendation 10****DONE**

The Juvenile Division of the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention should work with the Office of the Ombuds to ensure that the process to submit grievances to the Ombuds is available to youth in custody and that the materials provided to youth explain the difference between grievances to the Ombuds and grievances submitted internally.

STATUS UPDATE: DAJD worked with the Office of the Ombuds to update the youth handbook. The update incorporated the Ombuds requested language changes which clarifies its role and how youth can contact the Ombuds with any complaints or concerns. To further increase awareness, DAJD coordinated with the Office of the Ombuds to create and post informational posters throughout the facility and on the youths' electronic tablets.

IMPACT: By updating the language in the youth handbook, DAJD has ensured that access to the external Office of the Ombuds is clearly communicated, improving youth access to independent oversight on facility conditions.

Grant Dailey conducted this review. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at KCAO@KingCounty.gov or 206-477-1033.