



**King County**

**Dow Constantine**

King County Executive

September 14, 2017

Dr. Eric Trupin  
Director and Vice Chair  
University of Washington  
Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences  
2815 Eastlake Ave E, Ste. 200  
Seattle, WA 98102

Dear Dr. Trupin:

Thank you for your report “Working to Reduce the Use of Secure Confinement: A review of King County’s Children and Family Justice Center.” I understand that you convened a committee of community members to discuss juvenile justice reforms and the facility. I greatly appreciate your efforts and willingness to take on the hard work of proposing meaningful change. Your commitment to improving the lives of young people in King County is truly inspiring.

We requested that you review and evaluate the following aspects of the Children and Family Justice Center’s facility design:

- The impact of trauma on youth and need to incorporate best practices in facility designs;
- Staff training and interactions with youth in detention to better understand our current and future facility needs regarding a therapeutic environment for youth, including services and spaces in the facility; and
- Existing services in juvenile detention and how they could be better aligned with our community alternatives to detention and Safe Spaces proposal.

My administration has committed to a path of Zero Youth Detention while eliminating racial disproportionalities in the justice system. This work is multifaceted and ongoing, with many partners including families, educators, law enforcement, advocates, and others.

As designed, the Children and Family Justice Center includes space for restorative services, including:

**Community Program Room:** This will provide dedicated space for community groups to host workshops and classes for youth. Volunteer groups include: Powerful Voices, Unbound Sound Therapy Girls Group, Public Health Girls Group, Seattle University School of Law Legal Clinic Girls Group Program, UW Psychology Girls Group Program, YWCA Babes Network, Harborview PTSD Girls Group, Alcoholics Anonymous, King County Youth Chaplaincy, Alive

& Free IF Project, KUOW RadioActive, Meals on a Budget, visiting artist workshops, REST Youth Empowerment, Rhyme Circle drum class, Young Men's Circle, Food Handler's Permit Class, Making Healthy Choices, After-school tutoring.

**Gym:** This large skylight-lit gym will have enough space for a basketball game in one area, and other physical activities going on in another.

**King County Library System Site:** An official library site will continue to operate inside of juvenile detention. Librarians help youth find books they can appreciate as well as educate youth on how to take advantage of King County Library System Library resources when they are back in their community.

**Public Health Services Office:** All youth are screened for physical and mental health needs upon admission to the facility. Those needs are addressed during their time in detention or referred to an outside facility if beyond the scope of the detention clinic. King County Juvenile Detention contracts with the University of Washington School of Medicine for health care and behavioral health services. The Health Clinic also partners with Public Health - Seattle and King County to provide women's health care, including sexually transmitted disease prevention and reproductive health. Confidential HIV testing and counseling is provided.

**School:** Schooling is provided by Seattle Public School's Interagency Academy. Youth receive instruction in Reading, Language Arts, Mathematics, and Life Skills as appropriate for their age, school progress in the community, and prior level of achievement. Special Education curriculum is available if needed. Youth may also work towards their G.E.D.

**Peacemaking Circles:** A trained peacekeeper facilitates peacemaking circles for young men and women with the help of trained juvenile detention officers. This provides a supportive space for each to voice their current struggles, emotions, and unique stories and be heard.

**Chaplaincy and religious services:** Structured church services are held every Sunday evening. Chaplains are also available for consultations with youth during the week. Youth may request chaplains from any denomination to visit with them while they are in Juvenile Detention.

**Spiritual Center:** This room will be a room dedicated to spiritual practice, counseling and mentorship. (The current juvenile detention does not have this kind of space.)

You have produced a series of guiding, architectural and program recommendations, including further reducing the number of secure beds.

Original plans and policy changes have influenced the current number of bed spaces available at the CFJC. Below is a current breakdown of the types of bed spaces:

- **Secure Units: 7 units, 16 beds each, 112 beds**
  - These units are what make up the secure juvenile detention portion of the CFJC. There are 16 beds in each secure unit. Unlike the current juvenile detention, each unit has its own classroom/conference room and outdoor area that youth are free

to use. The interior design will be colorful and nature-themed. For safety reasons, it is intended that at least one unit be kept unused to ensure there is no overcrowding and in case a unit needs to be closed for practical purposes such as repairs.

- **BECCA Unit: 1 unit, 6 beds**
  - State law requires that some runaway youth be held by local juvenile detention facilities. This unit separates status offenders from youth who are being held for crimes against victims while the state's Department of Social & Health Services finds the youth a safe, non-detention placement.
- **Orientation Unit: 1 unit, 6 beds**
  - This is a very short-term area for youth. Some may stay here just when first admitted and given an orientation. Some youth may only wait here and not have to stay overnight.
- **Youth Program Space: 2 units, 16 beds each, 32 beds total**
  - These will be non-detention, non-secure spaces operated by community programs and alternatives to detention. Examples of programs that could operate in the space include Family Intervention and Restorative Services (FIRS), which is staffed by Pioneer Human Services. Both units make up a space of about 10,200 square feet. The Youth Program Space area has its own entry and exit separate from the courthouse and juvenile detention. This entry and exit will open to a public landscaped area alongside the new Alder Street Connection for pedestrians and cyclists.

Youth Program Spaces were initially planned to be a part of juvenile detention. In 2015, I directed that these spaces be converted to non-detention use for community-operated youth programs, lowering the secure detention bed count to 112. I also ordered a redesign to that as juvenile detention populations decline, more juvenile detention units can be converted to non-secure uses, such as Youth Program Spaces. This flexibility will allow for fewer secure beds in the future. Placement of new doors and walls allow for secure units to be converted into spaces that can join the Youth Program Space area.

Please see Appendix 1.

You recommend that youthful offenders charged as adults be transferred from adult facilities to the CFJC. I agree with this and have been planning for it. It should be noted that to do so would substantially increase the detention population.

As you know, I have named Deputy Executive Rhonda Berry to lead King County's juvenile justice reforms. Deputy Executive Berry will be responsible for drafting and implementing a Road Map to Community Safety and Effective Alternatives to Detention. That work will certainly include many of the recommendations you have proposed, including:

- Eliminating racial disparities in rates of arrest, referral, filing and detention
- Continuing our engagement with the Juvenile Justice Equity Steering Committee and other community stakeholders

- Improving workforce and skills training for both detained youth and youth on probation
- Expanding opportunities for community members to help our young people make the journey to a healthy and successful adulthood

I am pleased that elements of the CFJC's current design are reinforced in your report, including:

- *Incorporating best practices in facility design:*
  - As part of Intake, youth will be seated in an open reception area instead of being held in dorms
  - Creating a room for families during visits
  - Promoting art and self-expression so that young people can personalize all living units and shared spaces
- *Staff training and interactions to create a therapeutic environment for youth*
  - One staff member per 8 youth

Many of your recommendations such as transferring the Juvenile Division of the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention to Public Health involve different parties with varied interests. I believe this concept deserves special attention and will work with Deputy Executive Berry to gain a fuller understanding of the benefits and barriers.

While we are working with community partners to complete the elimination of admission of status offenders to secure detention, the ultimate decision to detain a young person does not lie with the Executive's Office or law enforcement but the judiciary. We have made known our strong desire for alternatives to detention, and we believe juvenile court judges and the King County Prosecuting Attorney are committed to the well-being of young people and their families.

The reason for the replacement of the entire Youth Services Center is its outdated layout and dilapidated condition. A replacement youth detention center is just one part of the project, but not an optional part. King County is required under state law (RCW 13.04.135) to provide space for secure detention of juvenile offenders.

I am proud of King County's record of working to lower the number of youth in detention. We have a current youth detention facility that could hold up to 212 youth. We have closed most of the facility and our current detained youth average about 50 on any given day. As I write there are 38 youth in detention at the Youth Services Center, though there are another 20 at the Maleng Regional Justice Center. We are required to have a youth detention facility but every day we should be working to avoid having anyone in it. If commission of serious crimes declines, and if we are successful in the long-term work of getting kids off to the best start in life, keeping youth in school, and building up alternatives to detention that are better for youth and also protect the community, so that judges decide that no youth need to be detained, it will be a special day for all of us.

Thank you for your Report and its important recommendations that will guide our work as we move forward. We have established audacious goals. This work will not be accomplished next year, or the year after that. But we will never lose sight of the future we all wish to inherit, when

we can transform the final detention unit into a community space. We will work tirelessly until that day is reality.

Sincerely,



Dow Constantine  
King County Executive

Appendix 1:

