



FAMILY MATTERS

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Summer, 2021

Support + Strength = Success

Welcome to the premiere edition of *Family Matters*! Our goal is to develop a network of DJJ involved families to support each other, especially those most recently involved in the juvenile justice system. With assistance and encouragement from each other, our families will be better equipped to advocate for their youth and become partners with the system working to help them succeed.

Our Family Engagement Committee, which meets the second Wednesday of each month (currently virtually), provides a way for families to get involved, get and share information and



have a voice within the department. One of the ways we will do this is with this quarterly newsletter. All we need is your e-mail address, and you will automatically receive it, along with invitations to join our meetings via computer or cell phone, with or without video.

Visitation Is Back, But With Some New Rules

After a long pause due to the pandemic, DJJ is pleased to announce that visitation has returned! It will look a little different than it has in the past, but you will once again be able to visit your family member in person, while observing the following conditions:

- Outdoors, masks required
- No physical contact
- Two visitors per resident
- Split campus

Tentative dates for July are the 11th for the individual cottage units and the 25th for the main building where you first enter. After these two visits are completed, Bon Air staff will review the procedure. Based on how successfully the visits went, and especially if COVID cases and exposures continue to go down, the schedule could change to more often.



Meet Our Team

Diane Leiter

Family Engagement Coordinator



My goal is to get more families involved in our work with the youth, from their entry into our system to their return home. Families are integral to the juvenile's success, and our DJJ staff welcome their support, help and encouragement of the youth. I share information, respond to questions and requests and try to maintain open communication.

Contact: (804) 314-5242 or diane.leiter@djj.virginia.gov

Tamla Brookins

Family Advocate



I would like to connect with families as a support and advocate for them and their children. Having personal experience with my child in DJJ has given me insight into what others are going through, and I would like to help. You are your child's greatest cheerleader, and I encourage you to get involved in their treatment. I am available to support and listen.

Contact: (804) 916-0146 or tamla.brookins@djj.virginia.gov

Reentry Advocates

The Reentry Advocates serve each region to help prepare committed youth for a seamless transition back into the community. Reentry Advocates help with the reentry process by connecting youth to employment services, providing support and assistance in post-secondary and vocational service, linking youth

as well as their families to community agencies for services and ensuring youth have identification documents.

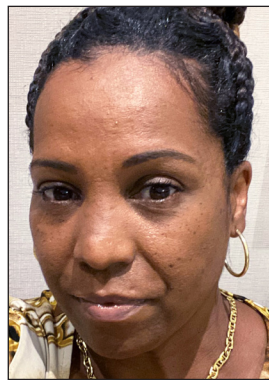
Need help with Medicaid applications, college/training programs, employment or other services? Don't hesitate to contact your child's Reentry Advocate! Their contact information is listed below.



Eastern Region
Kecia Brothers-Hayes
kecia.brothers
@djj.virginia.gov
(804) 972-4148



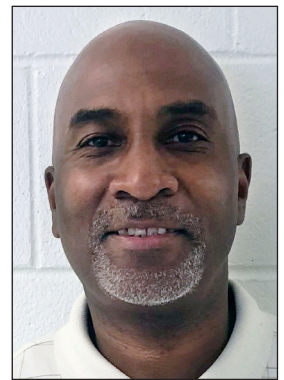
Central Region
Rowena Callis
rowena.callis
@djj.virginia.gov
(804) 837-6010



Southern Region
Sasha Davenport
sasha.davenport
@djj.virginia.gov
(804) 310-1783



Western Region
Jarrod Davis
jarrod.davis
@djj.virginia.gov
(804) 338-1053



Northern Region
George Peoples
george.peoples
@djj.virginia.gov
(804) 337-8337

You Can Be A Family Advocate!

DJJ is recruiting for Family Advocates to serve in the western, eastern, northern and southern regions of the state. These paid positions are

part-time, approximately 20 hours a month. If you are interested please contact Diane Leiter at (804) 314-5242, or diane.leiter@djj.virginia.gov.

Meet Our Team

Residential

Franklin Wilkes, Resident Specialist

Mr. Wilkes began his career with DJJ in 2010 at Beaumont JCC, where he worked with residents in the Work Education Release Program. In 2016, he became advocate for the Student Government Association (SGA). In 2017 he transferred to Bon Air JCC where he continues to work with the SGA. “We’ve seen young people enter this facility very rough around the edges,” he says. “I come to work to help someone’s child have a vibrant smile and utilize the potential they have stored inside them.”

Family Voice: One family member voiced appreciation for Counselor **Kacie Scott** at Bon Air, saying she “has been awesome with my son, very transparent with both of us. She calls at least once a month, and has been very encouraging to my son and me.”



Community

Alisha Winston, Probation Officer, CSU 14–Henrico

Ms. Winston started with DJJ in 2004 as a security officer at Bon Air, becoming a counselor in 2006. In 2016, she moved to the Henrico court service unit. She was drawn to DJJ by her desire to work with court-involved youth, and she says there is never a dull moment. She likes to travel to different facilities, and knowing where the youth are going. She especially enjoys knowing what happens when they leave the facilities, and how they progress in the community.

“Surround yourself with the dreamers and the doers, the believers and thinkers, but most of all, surround yourself with those who see the greatness within you, even when you don’t see it yourself.” This quote has been on Alisha’s desk since the start of her career.



Education

The Division of Education has continued to meet the challenge of providing learning experiences for our students during the pandemic while keeping everyone safe. By adhering to CDC protocols and facility policies, we were able to provide continuous access to learning since it began.

We have used a variety of strategies, including activating virtual platforms, taking the instruction to the housing units, and limiting the number of teachers and students in the classrooms. Through it all, we maintained services for our most academically vulnerable students. When vaccines became



available, we brought them on-site and in the surrounding communities to further ensure the safety of everyone at Bon Air.

Some highlights from the 2020-21 year:

- ✓ Built infrastructure for virtual learning.
- ✓ Began Town Hall meetings to foster family engagement.
- ✓ Administered two SAT tests and two Advanced Placement tests.
- ✓ Graduated more than 20 high school students.

We are excited about increasing our in-person instruction as we plan for an extended calendar for the 2021-22 school year.