

Youth Rehabilitation Services Workgroup

Recommendation Source & Discussion Companion (Feb–April 2026)

(Ranking and recommendation sheet is below this resource starting on p.4)

February 27 – Youth Service Bureau Panel

1. Youth Service Bureau Funding Restoration

- **Recommendation:** Fund Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs) as core statewide prevention and rehabilitation infrastructure
- **Source:** Wendy Wilcox (Advocacy & Training Center), Katrina Emerson (Talbot County YSB), Roselyn Caesar (Baltimore City YSB)
- **Rationale:** YSBs provide free, community-based, trauma-informed services that prevent system involvement and stabilize families. Loss of state funding has significantly reduced access and capacity.
- **Commissioner Discussion:**
 - Recognition that YSBs operate as front-end system alternatives, often engaging youth before DJS involvement
 - Concern about the sharp decline in funded sites statewide
 - Emphasis that services fill gaps for families unable to access private behavioral health care
 - Discussion of active legislative efforts to restore funding through a dedicated youth prevention fund

2. Formalized DJS Referral and Warm Handoff Process

- **Recommendation:** Establish standardized DJS referral protocols with required warm handoffs and follow-up
- **Source:** Youth Service Bureau Panel
- **Rationale:** Youth and families are identified by system actors but are not consistently or effectively connected to community-based services.
- **Commissioner Discussion:**
 - Panelists reported minimal direct referrals from DJS despite serving DJS-involved youth
 - Current referral processes described as informal, inconsistent, and lacking accountability

- Clarification that a “warm handoff” involves direct connection, not passive referral
- Emphasis on follow-up responsibility, as families often cannot navigate systems independently

March 27 – Continuum of Care Presentation

3. Expansion of Community-Based Alternatives to Confinement

- **Recommendation:** Expand community-based diversion and treatment alternatives to reduce reliance on confinement
- **Source:** Munazza Abraham and Kaya Swann, Continuum of Care Presentation
- **Rationale:** Research demonstrates that community-based models improve outcomes, reduce trauma, and are more cost-effective than confinement.
- **Commissioner Discussion:**
 - Acknowledgment that confinement disrupts education and increases long-term risk
 - Identification of effective models (e.g., MST, FFT, diversion programs) already in use but not scaled consistently
 - Recognition that the system is uneven, with strong treatment programs but weaker early intervention
 - Discussion of cost savings and improved outcomes in jurisdictions that have expanded alternatives

4. Statewide Service Inventory and Resource Mapping

- **Recommendation:** Develop a centralized, statewide inventory of youth services and providers
- **Source:** Continuum of Care Presentation
- **Rationale:** Services exist across jurisdictions but are fragmented, difficult to access, and not visible to system actors or families.
- **Commissioner Discussion:**
 - Findings showed significant gaps in awareness of available services
 - Lack of centralized system limits referrals, coordination, and planning
 - Noted that many providers operate outside of DJS contracts, further limiting visibility
 - Agreement that a resource map would support navigation, equity, and system accountability

5. Multidisciplinary Advisory Structure with Youth and Family Voice

- **Recommendation:** Establish a formal advisory structure including youth and family representation

- **Source:** Continuum of Care Presentation
- **Rationale:** System design and service delivery often lack direct input from those most impacted, reducing effectiveness and trust.
- **Commissioner Discussion:**
 - Proposal included minimum thresholds for youth and caregiver representation
 - Emphasis that relationships and trust drive engagement more than program design alone
 - Youth and caregiver feedback highlighted gaps in communication and relevance of services
 - Agreement that formal structures are needed to move beyond one-time engagement

April 24 – Young Men and Boys Initiative

6. Workforce Pathways Linked to Reentry and Stability

- **Recommendation:** Expand workforce development pathways tied to reentry and long-term stability
- **Source:** Vincent Harrington, Governor's Office for Children – Young Men and Boys Initiative
- **Rationale:** Employment and economic stability are key drivers of successful rehabilitation and reduced system involvement.
- **Commissioner Discussion:**
 - Presentation highlighted declining workforce participation and employment barriers, particularly for young men of color
 - Workforce programs were described as disconnected from mental health and support services
 - Emphasis on need for integrated pathways combining employment, mentorship, and support services
 - Discussion of current investments, including philanthropic funding and pilot programs, with potential for scaling.

Youth Rehabilitation Services Workgroup

Recommendation Ranking & Recommendation Worksheet (Feb–April 2026)

Scope: Youth Rehabilitation, Reentry, and Community-Based Supports

Timeframe: February – April 2026 Presenter Sessions

Instructions for Members

For each recommendation, please indicate:

- **Support:** Yes / No / Needs Revision
- **Priority:** High / Medium / Low
- **Comments:** Optional edits, conditions, or implementation considerations

ID	Recommendation	Source (Speaker & Meeting)	Explicit Pathway to Reform (as stated)	Mechanism Type	Support (Y/N/Revis e)	Priority (H/M/L)	Comments
YR1	Fund Youth Service Bureaus as core infrastructure	YSB Panel – Feb 27, 2026	State youth prevention fund legislation to restore and sustain YSBs	Legislative change; State funding			
YR2	Formalize DJS referral and warm handoff process	YSB Panel – Feb 27, 2026	Standardized referral protocol with required follow-up by DJS staff	Administrative reform; Coordination			
YR3	Expand community-based alternatives to confinement	Continuum of Care Scan – Mar 27, 2026	Scale diversion and community-based programs through policy and	Program funding; Policy alignment			

			funding alignment				
YR4	Develop statewide service inventory and resource map	Continuum of Care Scan – Mar 27, 2026	Create centralized, accessible service mapping and data infrastructure	Data infrastructure ; Systems coordination			
YR5	Establish multidisciplinary advisory structure with youth and family voice	Continuum of Care Scan – Mar 27, 2026	Formal advisory board embedded in system design and decision-making	Governance; Participation framework			
YR6	Expand workforce pathways tied to reentry	Young Men & Boys Initiative – Apr 24, 2026	Career pipeline development and employer partnerships for justice-involved youth	Workforce development; Cross-sector coordination			