

Fact Sheet
Cost-Benefit Analysis of the Use of the Northern Virginia Regional
Juvenile Detention Center and Alternatives

BACKGROUND OF NVJDC

The Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center (NVJDC) is a secure juvenile detention facility located at 200 South Whiting Street in the City of Alexandria.

- NVJDC is operated by Arlington County and the Cities of Alexandria and Falls Church through a Juvenile Detention Commission, as provided by state statute.¹
- NVJDC is regulated by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), which also provides partial funding to operate the program.
- Youth may be placed at the facility by order of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, or by an order of the Circuit Court.
- NVJDC serves male and female youth, aged 10 through 17. Typically, youth placed at the facility are aged 16-17, have multiple misdemeanor or felony offenses, are at moderate or high risk, and have been determined by the court to present a significant danger to themselves or others.

GOVERNANCE:

NVJDC is operated by the participating jurisdictions through the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Commission. By interjurisdictional agreement², the Commission is comprised of 5 members appointed by their respective City Councils or County Board.

- City of Alexandria: 2 Commissioners: Ms. Patricia Hennig; Ms. Wykiki Alston
 - Arlington County: 2 Commissioners: Dr. Alfred Taylor; Mr. Earl Conklin
 - City of Falls Church: 1 Commissioner: Mr. Alex Boston
- The commission was established in 1956, and the original NVJDC facility was dedicated in 1961. The facility was fully renovated in the late 1980s and has had several upgrades to various physical and security systems.
 - In addition to the three current participating jurisdictions, Fairfax County was originally a member of the Commission. Fairfax County withdrew participation in the 1980s but may retain equity in the property/facility.
 - The Commission's powers include: establishing a budget, employing staff, setting regulations, acquiring property, and undertaking construction.³

¹ <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title16.1/chapter11/section16.1-315/>

² Interjurisdictional agreement is currently expired.

³ <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title16.1/chapter11/section16.1-318/>

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NVJDC SERVICES

- **Pre-Dispositional Detention** - youth awaiting trial or sentencing typically from 1 – 30 days but may be longer for felony cases before the circuit court.
- **Post-Dispositional Detention** - youth may be sentenced up to 30 days in detention for conviction of a class 1 misdemeanor or up to 180 days for a felony offense.
- **Basic Services Provided** - secure housing, supervision, medical care, transportation, education, evidence based, psycho-educational groups and programming, food service, recreation, volunteer programming, and parental visitation. Behavioral health services are provided at the facility by a representative of each jurisdiction’s Community Services Board.
- **Educational Services** - provided through the City of Alexandria Public Schools, which provides transition services when youth re-enter regular school settings.
- **Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice Services** - NVJDC recently entered an agreement to provide specialized services to youth committed to DJJ. The JDC operates a *Centralized Assessment Program*, and a *Community Placement Program*, for up to 8 girls. These programs utilize the surplus capacity of the facility and reduce costs to participating jurisdictions.
- NVJDC’s agreement with the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) was terminated in September 2018. NVJDC notified the U.S. Marshals Service of termination of their contract in August 2019, which also terminated the ICE rider on that contract. NVJDC maintains no other federal contracts and does not accept referrals or placements from any federal agency or program.

UTILIZATION

NVJDC has a capacity for 70 youth. Utilization by all jurisdictions has steadily declined over the last decade with a reduction of over 70% between FY 2006 and 2019.

Total Bed Days by Jurisdiction

FY	Arlington	Falls Church	Alexandria	All Jurisdictions
2006:	10,979.	498.	8,615.	20,092.
2011:	8,244.	172.	5,569.	13,985.
2016:	3,780.	54.	4,496.	8,330.
2019:	2,893.	102.	2,579.	5,574.

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The decline in utilization of the JDC is related to several positive community trends:

- **Decrease in juvenile crime and increased diversion.** Juvenile delinquency cases have declined in all the participating jurisdictions. This decline is part of a broader trend in the Northern Virginia Region and the State.
- **Increased use of alternatives to secure detention.** Alternatives such as electronic monitoring, outreach detention, and less-secure shelter care are used more frequently for low and moderate risk youth.
- **Structured Detention Assessment Instrument.** There have been changes in juvenile court practices for determining which youths should be placed in detention. Use of a structured detention assessment instrument has limited the potential for subjectivity in these decisions.

YOUTH SERVED

The youth ordered into juvenile detention often have significant behavioral health, family, child welfare, and/or educational needs, which contribute to their offending behavior. Assessment and provision of services to address these needs are routinely the focus of the Court and while in the NVJDC.

Arlington County/City of Falls Church. A July 22, 2019, point-in-time count of youth at the facility, indicated that nine (9) youth, placed by an Arlington Juvenile Court or Circuit Court judge, were either in the facility or released within the previous 10 days. Of the nine (9), seven (7) were residents of Arlington County and two (2) were residents of Washington, D.C. There were no youth in placement from Falls Church. The offense histories for the nine youths include the following pending charges or convictions:

1. Felony Auto Theft, Felony Distribution of Narcotics
2. Felony Larceny/Failure to Appear
3. Felony Burglary, Felony Auto Theft, Felony Vandalism
4. Felony Robbery, Assault by Mob, History of a Weapons Conviction, Larceny
5. Misdemeanor Weapons, Drug Distribution, Discharge of a Firearm, Assault, Robbery
6. Robbery, Assault by Mob, Assault
7. Felony Burglary
8. Status Offense,
9. Contempt of Court (Absconder from a court-ordered program)

City of Alexandria. On August 9, 2019, a point-in-time count of youth at the facility indicated that six (6) youth were placed by an Alexandria Juvenile Court or Circuit Court judge. Of the six (6), one (1) was a resident of Prince William County, two (2) were residents of Washington, D.C.,

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and three (3) were residents of Alexandria. The offense histories for these six (6) youths are as follows:

1. Felony Grand Larceny (Intent to Damage Property (x2), Probation Violation (x5), Violation of Court Order, Petty Larceny (x2)
2. Felony Attempted Malicious Wounding, Felony Use Firearm Commission of Felony
3. Felony: Attempted Malicious Wounding, Felony Use Firearm Commission of Felony, Felony Convicted Felon Possess/Transport Firearm, Possession of Marijuana (x2), Trespassing, Identity Theft (x2), Grand Larceny
4. Felony Racketeering
5. Felony Racketeering (Petty Larceny (x2)
6. Probation Violation (Assault & Battery)

FUNDING

The NVJDC Commission has adopted an FY 2020 expenditure budget of \$ **5,801,544** and receives revenue from a variety of sources. Contributions from the three jurisdictions are based on each jurisdiction’s proportionate use of the facility over the previous three years.

NVJDC Expenditures and Jurisdictional Contributions

	FY2017 Actual	FY2018 Actual	FY2019 Actual	FY2020 Projected
NVJDC Expenditures	5,839,779.	5,706,025.	5,095,364.	5,801,544.
Arlington Share	1,715,616.	1,624,639.	2,011,960.	2,019,908.
Falls Church Share	39,726.	32,568.	25,512.	43,956.
Alexandria Share	1,132,625.	1,099,394.	1,538,853.	1,519,825.
Other Revenue	3,189,290.	4,185,631.	2,584,124.	2,684,736.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

As part of its FY2018 adopted budget the Alexandria City Council requested a “regional review of juvenile detention services...” The Arlington County Board and the Falls Church City Council agreed to support this review.

RATIONALE

- The utilization rates for the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center have dramatically declined over the past ten or more years.

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- Lower utilization, and the fixed costs associated with operating the secure facility, have led to an increase in the per diem costs to the jurisdictions that place youth at the facility.
- Fairfax County, and other jurisdictions in Virginia, have experienced similar declines in utilization of their secure juvenile detention facilities. This has led to surplus capacity of secure juvenile detention in the Northern Virginia Region, indicating the potential for further regionalization.

STATUS

- The City of Alexandria is serving as the contracting and fiscal agent for the study. The City advertised a Request for Proposal in December 2018. In July 2019, The Moss Group was awarded the contract by the selection committee, which included representatives from Alexandria, Arlington, Falls Church, and the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice.
- The study commenced on July 29, 2019. The final report is expected to be presented by The Moss Group in January 2020.
- The cost for the study is \$299,372. These costs will be shared by the jurisdictions as follows: Alexandria: \$147,705; Arlington: \$148,437; Falls Church: \$3,230.

SCOPE

The JDC Study will provide the following information and analysis.

- 1. Historical review and compilation of documents related to the center's structure, operation, and ownership/control of assets.**
- 2. Analysis of national, state & local best practices related to juvenile justice & incarceration and evidence-based, cost-efficient detention programming.**
- 3. Analysis of existing Center operations and potential efficiencies** – evaluate areas of cost, quality of service, management, governance, sustainability, and safety.
- 4. Evaluation of the potential for further regionalization of juvenile detention services (e.g. with existing jurisdictions and Fairfax County),** to include impact on youth, families, communities & stakeholders, cost, education, re-entry, and transportation.
- 5. Provision of a comparative financial and service delivery analysis of the 2 proposed options: continued operation of the center by existing jurisdictions, versus further regionalization (e.g. with Fairfax County)**
- 6. Recommendations and full report:** written report and recommendations provided and publicly presented.

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PLANNED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A vital component of the study includes opportunities for the stakeholders, including the public in each of the 3 participating jurisdictions, to provide input to inform the study and to receive debriefings about the study's recommendations. The community engagement plan will offer stakeholder groups opportunities to learn about the issues and provide input. The following are examples of stakeholder groups which will be included:

County Board and City Councils: Opportunities for a tour and description of the NVJDC will be offered to board and council members. The final report and recommendations will be delivered to the governing bodies. It is respectfully recommended that the briefing be provided in a joint work session given its regional impact.

Youth and Parents: Input from the families directly served by secure detention services will be obtained to assess the impact, including around issues of access and family engagement.

Organizations involved in Youth Advocacy and Service Provision: Input will be sought from public and private organizations invested in the well-being of children, youth, and families.

Juvenile Justice Systems: Judges, Bar Associations, Commonwealth's Attorneys, Public Defender, and Court Services staff serving youth involved with Juvenile and Circuit Courts will be briefed on the study and provided opportunity for input.

Law Enforcement: Briefings and opportunities for input will be arranged with the Sheriffs' Offices and Police Departments of the jurisdictions to ensure the impact on their services are considered in the analysis and delineated in the findings.

Community Service Boards: Input from CSB's will be solicited as they provide behavior health services to youth while in secure detention.

Public School Systems: Input from public school systems will be sought to assess impact on educational services to youth while in secure detention and upon their re-entry to regular school settings.

Departments of Social Services: Input from child welfare departments in each of the jurisdictions will be sought as youth placed in secure detention are sometimes involved with Child Protective Services or in foster care.

*This Fact Sheet was developed by the Project Team for the Study:
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