

Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Centers Business Plan

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NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Mission.

DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers System Business Plan

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I. Executive Summary

Background

For over 130 years, the State of Nebraska has been providing rehabilitation services for youth. The Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) at Geneva began operations in 1892, and the Kearney location began operations in 1881. Since opening the doors, both facilities have supported the mission as it has evolved and expanded over the years, despite growing modern constraints – aging physical plants (dating back to the 1950s), increased requirements for programming and staffing, and labor supply challenges.

The State of Nebraska has an opportunity to improve the services provided to youth at its YRTCs. This includes depth and scope of programming, appropriate staffing (levels and qualifications), updated facilities and security functionality, treatment and care protocols, and the educational and rehabilitative needs of its resident youth. The current facilities, staffing and programming are not best suited to meet the current needs, nor sustainable in meeting desired future state demands. This plan outlines initiatives to address immediate facility concerns and staffing needs necessary for the security, safety, health, wellness and development of youth residents.

In December of 2013, the Nebraska Children’s Commission, along with the Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee, produced a report outlining recommendations specific to YRTC with the purpose of creating an “ideal juvenile justice treatment system.” This plan includes details that reflect the intent of OJS’s recommendations; for intermediate and long-term planning for YRTC.

In July and August of this year, a group of cross-system stakeholders met to discuss an immediate emergent need, and to design a desired future state. These meetings are noteworthy in signaling “**system collaboration**,” as well as commonality for improving the outcomes for our youth. The stakeholder group included members from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Probation and the juvenile courts, non-profits and advocacy organizations, and the Legislature. The outcome of these meetings produced a vision for the YRTC:

Vision

- Children have **hope and sense of the future** – they have identified and are living the best version of themselves.
- Children have a **voice and choice** in plans for their future as well as services and resources to help them be successful.
- Children view their experience at the YRTC as a “watershed moment” in their lives – something having a **profound and positive impact on who they are** as a person.
- The **focus of treatment is on the whole family** and is rooted in compassion and well-being.
- Children are **connected to family, mentors and other caring adults** for support and guidance.
- Children **experience increased resiliency and skills**.

- Children **successfully transition** from the YRTC with a focus on tailored services and treatment timelines based on the need for opportunities to experience the “real world” before transitioning back to the community, and expectations that are age and developmentally appropriate.

Benchmarking & Guiding Principles

The leadership of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and DHHS consulted with the DLR Group for the purpose of evaluating current and potential interim facilities, and to gain an understanding of the desired future vision for YRTC. The DLR Group was helpful in providing benchmark research from states that have undergone similar transitions of its juvenile rehabilitation treatment programs. Similarly, DHHS has collected benchmark research from other state’s programs. Preliminary review of the research identified several key success factors in both facility design and programming. Below is an adaption from the research elements and is inclusive of the **Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP)** principles identified in the **2013 OJS report**. These serve as guiding principles in designing and implementing plans for YRTC.

- Multi-disciplinary team (MDT)¹ planning and execution of among state agencies
- Engaging key system stakeholders in planning and collaboration – DHHS, DAS, Probation, the juvenile courts, advocacy organizations and the Legislature
- Strength-based programming that promotes adolescent brain development and positive human development – skills building, mental health, healing and personal growth, empowerment, problem solving and emotional intelligence
- Adoption of small-group care model core elements – cohort consistency, relationships, homelike living spaces, self-care and shared responsibilities of shared spaces
- Appropriate aftercare and re-entry are essential to case planning and successful transitioning back to the community
- Academic achievement and engagement are critical elements for case planning and successful re-entry – core curriculum, life skills, emotional intelligence and career skills
- Engaging families as partners early and throughout the continuum of care
- Promotion of psychological and physical safety for residents and staff with integration into daily activities
- Designing facilities that promote treatment and development vs. juvenile detention
- Data is continuously collected, analyzed and reported to drive decision making, guide case planning, quality improvement and success with activities and programming

1. MDT includes unit manager, LMHT, clinical supervisor, case manager, teachers, principal, nurse, behavioral analyst, behavioral tech & activity specialist

DHHS is committed to its mission of *Helping People Live Better Lives*. This includes ensuring care environments are culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse to support our youth and families in providing youth rehabilitation and treatment services.

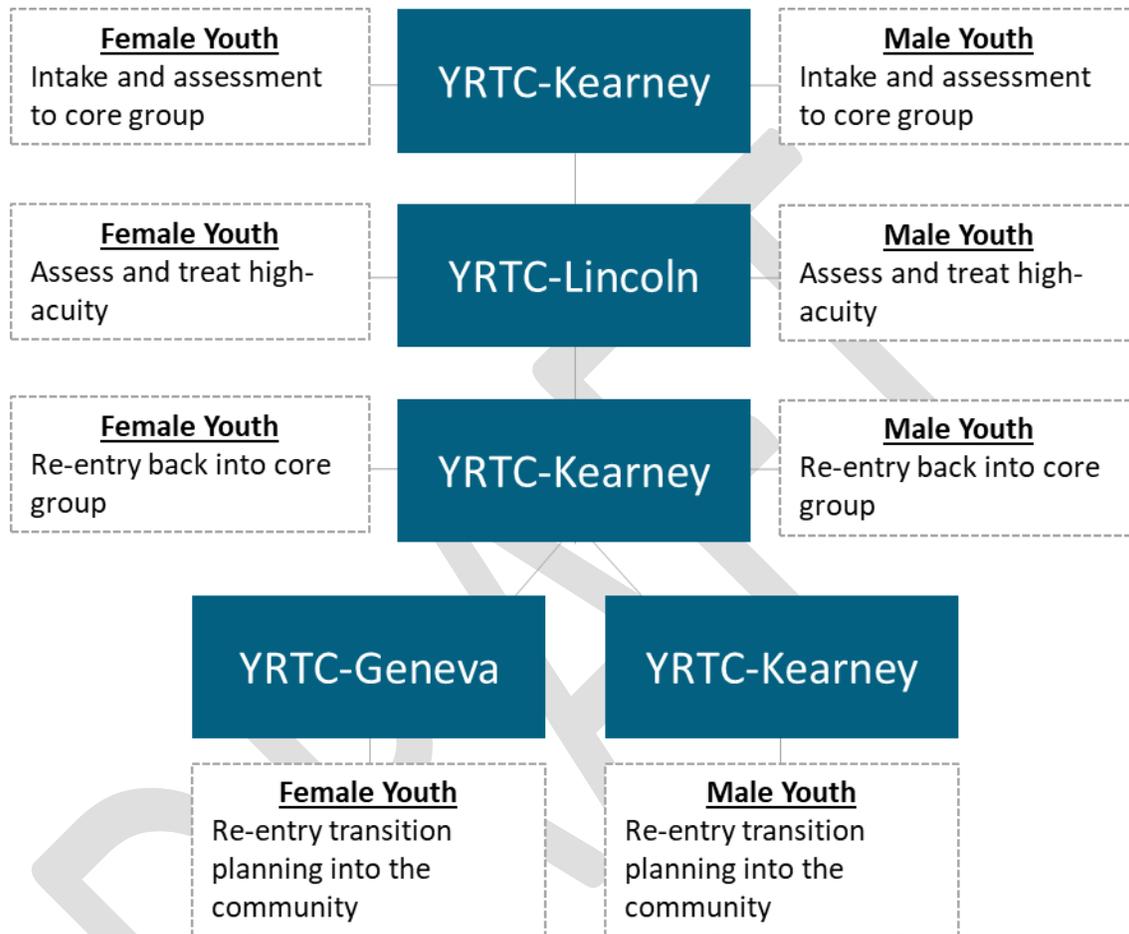
As current operations are not sustainable, the Department must execute strategies to position the State's YRTC's for future success. Given the emergent facility and staffing needs, DHHS will take a three-pronged approach in developing the **YRTC System**, implementing a plan to achieve short-term goals, and allow for **long-range strategic planning** done in collaboration with key *system stakeholders*. This three-pronged approach will address immediate facility needs, while ensuring the safety and well-being of the resident population.

Business Goals:

- Develop a system that will provide appropriate level of care and security for youth they progress in their treatment.
- Implement targeted interventions to high-acuity, at-risk youth separate from the core group that is positively responding to programming.
- Develop population specific programming (gender, acuity, culture, linguistics and race) and programming based on a youth's progress and needs for transitioning back to the community.

YRTC Treatment System – Three-Pronged Approach:

The three-pronged approach will accomplish these goals utilizing facilities based on their security and service capabilities. The facilities include YRTC-Kearney, YRTC-Lincoln and YRTC-Geneva.



II. YRTC System Campus Business Descriptions

YRTC-Kearney

This plan includes current services provided at the YRTC-Kearney campus. YRTC-Kearney is the hub for the YRTC system, providing initial intake, assessment and programming for the core group of youth. YRTC-Kearney has a capacity to serve 172 youth. The campus includes five open living units, with one unit having separate youth sleeping rooms, and four units providing a dormitory-style setting. YRTC-Kearney has a dining hall and chapel, and recreational activities which include an indoor pool, gymnasium, weight room, baseball field, outdoor play pads, a soccer field and an obstacle course.

Key Highlights

- The YRTC-Kearney campus includes the Dickson Behavioral Stabilization Unit, which is the most secure unit on campus. This unit is utilized for youth who are struggling to be compliant with programming, exhibit aggressive behavior or who have displayed other behaviors which make them a risk to themselves, others or the well-being of the facility.
- YRTC-Kearney's school is an accredited high school from which youth can graduate. Additional training and certifications are available for youth in vocational career paths.

Programming

The programming at YRTC-Kearney is based on the Phase model, which assesses youth behavior from admission through discharge. Upon arrival at YRTC-Kearney and throughout their stay, youth are given assessments to establish baseline metrics, and then to assess progress as they move through the programming. The facility uses the University of Rhode Island's Change Assessment Scale (URICA) to assess a youth's readiness to change. This assessment is given upon admission and again toward the end of Phase 2. Another tool used is the Inventory of Callous-Unemotional Traits (ICU) which assesses the personality trait of callousness or emotional coldness. This assessment is administered upon admission and again during Phases 3 and 5 of the program.

The Phase model is an incentive based program in which youth are scored daily on their compliance with the program, interactions with their peers and their interactions with staff. A youth's scores dictate their movement through the program and identifies which incentives they are eligible to receive.

YRTC-Lincoln

This plan will seek to establish services at Lancaster County Youth Services Center (LCYSC or YRTC-Lincoln), which has the capacity of 20 individual rooms divided between two separate pods, a day room and a separate secure outdoor recreational space. **New programming** will be developed to serve the needs for both male and female youth with high behavioral acuity and will include **intensive behavioral modification** programming, **family treatment** and **family support**. This will establish a model for successful transition for youth back to YRTC-Kearney where they can continue core programming or back to the community (if youth age out). Similar to the core programming, YRTC-Lincoln may include treatment for mental health conditions such as conduct disorders, oppositional defiant disorders, borderline personality disorders, disruptive mood dysregulation disorders, ADHD and PTSD.

Key Highlights

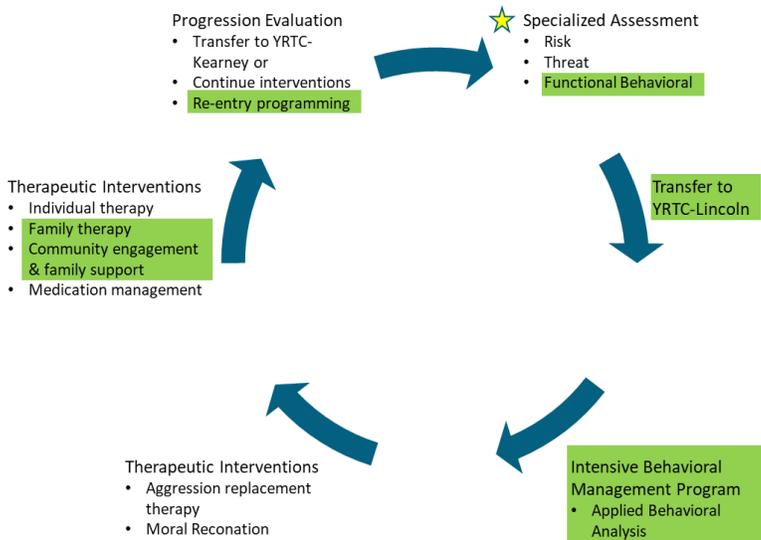
- This plan allows for separation of female and male youth, one pod for each gender.
- This plan allows for implementation of **targeted behavioral programming** for high-acuity youth, a trauma therapy model, family therapy and medical and psychiatric staffing.
- The facility provides the appropriate **physical structure and security** required to serve high-acuity youth.
- Operations will be phased into this location to allow for appropriate adjustment for both youth and staff development.

The youth that will be relocated to YRTC-Lincoln have unique needs and require intensive, targeted behavioral programming specific to these needs. They are admitted with known severe behavioral issues, or since in custody, they have demonstrated behaviors that have escalated to the degree that they cannot be safely managed in the congregate care setting on the YRTC-Kearney campus.

The YRTC-Lincoln physical structure will provide additional security and supervision capabilities through individual rooms with the ability to secure. These are critical capabilities to have when providing treatment when youth behaviors are imminently dangerous to themselves, other youth and staff. While these capabilities are key, this population will also require unique therapeutic programming to replace problematic behavior tendencies with adaptive, functional behavior.

In addition to security and supervision capabilities, YRTC-Lincoln will provide intensive programming for youth in the YRTC system who are not responding to behavioral treatment at YRTC-Kearney. This is only after the YRTC-Kearney team has thoroughly assessed the youth and determined that more intensive behavioral interventions are needed to help stabilize the youth. The treatment at YRTC-Lincoln, outlined below, will be highly therapeutic in a safe and secure treatment setting.

Once the youth's behaviors have stabilized and they are responding to programming, the youth will return to the main campus at YRTC-Kearney for continuation of their treatment program, but at a reduced intensity level.



**Items in green indicate new programming*

Behavioral management, including specific therapeutic models such as Applied Behavioral Analysis, have well researched validity and applicability to a wide range of populations that experience disruptive or maladaptive behavior. This includes children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other developmental disabilities as well as individuals in the criminal justice system.

Behavioral management interventions can be provided in various intensities and settings from outpatient, home based models to intensive residential models. Youth at YRTC-Lincoln will receive intensive behavioral modification interventions from staff specifically trained in behavioral modification through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB).

Programming Highlights

- Specialized assessment – risk, threat and functional behavior
- Intensive behavioral management interventions
- Staff trained and supervised by Board Certified Behavior Analysts
- Enhanced family treatment and support
- Progress and transition to re-entry programming

Direct care staff (formerly youth security specialists) will be certified as Registered Behavioral Technicians (RBT) which will involve creating a different classification for this direct care staff. Other staff will also receive the RBT training including the recreational therapy staff but will not be required to be certified for their classification. Current activity specialist staff will also be re-classified and additional requirements around recreational therapy will be required of the job to ensure the recreational therapy provided to the youth is expanded beyond what is currently being provided at the YRTC-Kearney.

YRTC-Geneva

This plan also includes re-establishing services at the YRTC-Geneva campus with the primary purpose of housing female youth that will be transitioning back to the community. Based on historical volumes and capacity, the program will serve between 3-6 female youth.

Programming Highlights

Youth that will be transitioning back to the community have different needs from those that are within the core population. The youth will need to be in an environment that is less restrictive and mimics a home environment. Programming will include family treatment and enhancing personal life skills. The final 60 days of a youth's treatment will include 30 days of preparation and the final 30 days of skills application. At day 30, an Individualized Re-entry Plan (IRP) is due to the court for review. This transition process will require collaboration between the YRTC treatment team, Probation's Re-entry supervisor, community providers and schools to ensure a smooth transition.

During the preparation phase, treatment within the facility will include medication management, and weekly family and individual therapy (or more frequent depending on youth and family needs). The YRTC team will continue to collaborate with the Department of Labor and Vocational Rehabilitation to offer opportunities for obtaining needed job certifications to facilitate successful re-entry.

The YRTC-Geneva program will follow the same Phase 5 model offered at the YRTC-Kearney campus with an emphasis on life skills, increased responsibilities, community involvement and independent living. Individual, group and family therapy will transition to the YRTC-Geneva campus. The programming will continue to be individualized and based on the youth's assessments. Components of the YRTC-Geneva program will include:

- Peer support group meetings 5 days per week
- Daily independent living skills training
- School services for youth who have not graduated; vocational training for those youth who have graduated 5 days per week
- Individual and family therapy and family engagement based on the treatment plan, at least 1x per week for each, continuing through discharge
- Multi-Disciplinary team meeting 1x per week to include the family or other natural supports
- Recreational therapy at least one hour per day
- Work release and opening a bank account for youth who have graduated. Youth still in school will have an opportunity for volunteer activities
- Weekly furloughs or day passes for the youth to meet with providers
- Community visits to ensure youth are comfortable in the community setting
- Home visits by Probation Officer, case manager and therapist
- Facilitated restorative justice conferences in home community
- Preparation and attending the hearing for re-entry

III. Performance Metrics

YRTC System Performance Metrics		
Goal	Metric	Baseline
Decrease assaults on staff by 20%	- 20%	132
Decrease female youth readmissions	<= 15%	33%
Decrease male youth readmissions	<=15%	19%
Decrease all youth re-offending	TBD	TBD
Decrease female youth elopements	- 50% <= 6	13
Decrease male youth elopements	- 50% <= 9	19

YRTC System Performance Metrics	
Campus	Metric
YRTC - Kearney	Family engagement
	Educational achievements
	Family satisfaction
	Teammate satisfaction
	Decrease Dickson admits
	Furlough success goals
	Length of Stay
	Number of confined youth
YRTC - Lincoln	Family engagement
	Educational achievements
	Family satisfaction
	Teammate satisfaction
	Length of Stay
	ABA Metrics
	Number of confined youth
YRTC - Geneva	Family engagement
	Educational achievements
	Family satisfaction
	Teammate satisfaction
	Furlough success goals
	Length of stay
	Number of confined youth

IV. Education

Unification across the DHHS-OJS Special Purpose School System

The Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Juvenile Services will collaborate with the Nebraska Department of Education to maintain an accredited Special Purpose School System serving all youth committed to its care across multiple campuses. West Kearney High School, located on the YRTC-Kearney campus, will serve as the DHHS-OJS Special Purpose School System’s hub, with additional school buildings at the YRTC-Geneva campus and the proposed YRTC-Lincoln campus.

General Requirements for the Special Purpose School System

- To continue as an accredited school system, the DHHS-OJS Special Purpose School System will meet the mandatory requirements for legal operation as set forth in Title 92 NAC 10, sections 003.01 through 003.11.
- DHHS-OJS and NDE will seek to revise the West Kearney High School’s Special Purpose School Agreement to include all school sites across the DHHS-OJS Special Purpose School System.
- DHHS-OJS will develop unified curricula across all school sites, ensuring all schools offer fall and spring semesters, plus an 8-week summer school session. The school year will run July 1st through June 30th.
- DHHS-OJS will retain a Superintendent who will head administration of the Special Purpose School System.
- DHHS-OJS will establish a governing body (school board) for its school system.
- DHHS-OJS will collaborate with the NDE and the appropriate school district(s) to ensure the educational needs of all students are met, including those with a disability.

Additional Goals of the Special Purpose School System

- DHHS-OJS will enhance use of multi-site and distance learning as authorized by Title 92 NAC 10, and as appropriate with students’ educational needs.
- DHHS-OJS will enhance the students’ career readiness and employability upon discharge, in partnership with NDE Vocational Rehabilitation and Nebraska Department of Labor.
- DHHS-OJS will continue to collaborate with NDE, Probation and the appropriate school district(s) to facilitate timely, successful re-entry into public school or post-secondary education program.

Additional Requirements per School:

YRTC- Kearney

- School Principal
- Media/Technology staff
- Library for students
- Special Education Director
- Guidance Counselor

- At least one teacher endorsed in: science, language arts, math and social sciences

YRTC- Geneva*

- School Principal
- Media/Technology staff
- Library for students
- Special Education staff
- Guidance Counselor

- At least one endorsed teacher for: science, language arts, math and social sciences

YRTC- Lincoln*

- School Principal
- Media/Technology staff
- Library for students
- Special Education staff
- Guidance Counselor

- At least one endorsed teacher for: science, language arts, math and social sciences

Considerations for Revised Special Purpose Agreement:

- DHHS-OJS could request the sharing of principals and other mandatory staff positions between multiple school buildings when any one YRTC site's population may nullify the need for full-time staff onsite.
- DHHS-OJS must consider the requirements of any labor union/teaching contracts when exploring staffing alternatives.
- DHHS-OJS could consider initially using portions of the Kearney and Geneva school libraries to begin a library in Lincoln or entering into a library sharing agreement with another Lincoln residential placement, such as Lancaster County Youth Services Center.

V. Implementation Plan

YRTC – Lincoln Phased Development Plan

Phase	Operations	Programming	Youth Progression
Phase 1 October 15 – December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lease execution ▪ Cameras installation 12/15/19 ▪ IT Networking & connectivity 12/15/19 ▪ Contract management 11/15/19 (pharmacy, FBA training [UNMC], trauma model, laundry, food services, religious, transportation) ▪ Recruitment 10/21/19 ▪ FOP plan 10/16-10/18/19 ▪ FOP 10/21-10/25/19 ▪ Ordering supplies 11/30/19 ▪ Capital equipment 11/30/19 ▪ LCYSC & YRTC-Lincoln daily scheduling 12/15/19 ▪ Staff security access 12/15/19 ▪ Develop policies & procedures 11/15/19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff training BCBA ▪ Staff training ART & MRT ▪ Finalize assessments ▪ Develop modification programming ▪ Clinical support contracting (psychiatric/medication, MH therapy, pharmacy, dental, medicine & nursing) ▪ Education model & agreements *all contracts commence 10/17/19, execute 11/01/19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 females
Phase 2 February – March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ POD 1 & 2 30 min glass installation ▪ Locker enhancements ▪ Staff on-boarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trauma model (TARGET) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 females ▪ 3 males <i>cumulative</i>
Phase 3 May 2020			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 females ▪ 4 males <i>cumulative</i>

YRTC – Geneva Timeline

Date	Activity
October 9, 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facility construction completed
October – November 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Re-training staff 10/25/19 ▪ Furniture 10/25/19 ▪ Construction punch list and clean up ▪ Contracting (food, medical & recreational) 11/30/19
November - December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Female youth and family assessment ▪ Order supplies & capital equipment ▪ Installation of beds
January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Female youth transition (3-6)

VI. Future Planning and Development

Establishing the state of Nebraska's YRTC system, combined with family engagement and partnering with juvenile probation, will achieve the business goals:

- Develop a system that will provide appropriate level of care and security for youth they progress in their treatment.
- Implement targeted interventions to high-acuity, at-risk youth separate from the core group that is positively responding to programming.
- Develop population specific programming (for gender and acuity levels), and programming based on a youth's progress and needs for transitioning back to the community.

Achieving these goals is a short-term approach. There remains a need to address the aging physical structure, on-going security needs and staff recruitment challenges particularly in rural markets. Moreover, additional work is needed to develop a long-term plan which addresses root causes, reduces recidivism and ultimately enhances the lives of Nebraska's youth.

Many states are faced with similar problems, and there is no one system that has been developed to address all the root causes. There are states, however, that have implemented models which have achieved success and demonstrated a reduction of re-incarceration rates in both juvenile and adult corrections (as youth age). Two notable benchmark studies are in New York City and **The Missouri Model**. Though unique geographically, both these models have common themes for success.

New York City Model – C2H (Close to Home)¹

- Involving a broad group of stakeholders in the reform design
- Understand the current population to determine appropriate needs
- Establish a clear process to guide dispositional decision-making
 - The Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) to assess a young person's criminogenic needs
 - Structured Decision-Making (SDM) grid
- Emphasize community-based programming within the new system
- Residential program design around 3 core elements – education, family engagement and release planning and aftercare

Missouri Model²

- Emphasis on community-based programming and engagement, close to youth's home
- Focus on youth development and family engagement
- Emphasis on academic, pre-vocational and communication skills
- Closely supervised small groups, with individualized attention
- Positive environments vs least restrictive with coercive techniques

- Prevention and early intervention

1. Weissman, M., Ananthakrishnan, V. & Vincent Schiraldi, February 2019. *Moving Beyond Youth Prisons: Lessons from New York City's Implementation of Close to Home*. Columbia University, New York.
2. Mendel, R. & The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *The Missouri Model – Reinventing the Practice of Rehabilitating Youthful Offenders*. Baltimore, MD.

Additionally, the DLR Group provided examples of facility design projects they have worked on in Colorado, Oregon and Los Angeles. The facilities were designed based on the **LA Model**:

- Multi-disciplinary team planning occurs with collaboration across agencies
- Programming is focused on skill-building, mental health, healing and personal growth
- Families are engaged early and often
- Aftercare and re-entry are the core drivers for planning
- Small-group care model – therapy, living spaces and relationships
- Probation and other staff are consistently integrated into program delivery
- Programming is individualized and data driven

These models are inclusive of themes that are consistent with the earlier mentioned research, guidelines and most notably the December 2013 recommendations from the **Nebraska Children's Commission – Juvenile Services (OJS) Committee**.

Establishing the YRTC-System is the first step to reforming Nebraska's youth services. DHHS is committed to Nebraska's youth – ensuring they lead healthy lives and receive appropriate planning, treatment, skills development and successful re-entry back to their communities. We will lead this initiative and work collaboratively with key stakeholders in redesigning our system of care across the continuum, to better serve our youth and their families.