



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Henrico County

Program Title: Detention Home Outreach

Program Category: Parks & Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

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Title: Deputy County Manager for Community Affairs

Signature: 

Program Overview

The Henrico County Detention Home incarcerates juveniles who are awaiting court action for committing criminal offenses. This group includes offenders, children in need of supervision, and certain traffic offenders. While housed at the detention home, juveniles are offered programs in education, recreation, and optional religious services, as well as mental health screening, evaluations, and medical services. Aside from the services required of and provided by the Detention Home, Henrico County Recreation and Parks (HCRP) staff recognized the potential to enhance opportunities for the incarcerated youth to engage in positive and effective socialization, self-expression, stress management, problem solving, and general life skill building through art programming. Our goal has been to provide an art activity – starting with visits once a month – to begin forming a relationship with the staff at the Detention Home, as well as with the youth being detained. Our initial meetings would help us determine what types of activities we could offer within the confines of the facility and what would most benefit the youth in the Home. Since its inception in January 2023, the art program has been offered monthly and has served 162 youth.

Problem/Challenge/Situation Faced by Locality

Detained youth are often at risk, and tend to have poor stress management, problem-solving skills, self-esteem, and potentially limited recreational opportunities. Art helps youth express emotions, increase awareness of worth, and promotes effective communication.

It is indisputable that there are many benefits in self-expression through art and positive recreational activities and in the role these experiences play in a youth's development and ongoing life choices. Giving youth opportunities to explore different art forms and creativity can

arm them with healthy tools to move through the many challenges they face every day. Many of the participants have not had the benefit of such an activity, the encouragement to pursue them, or have simply chosen alternative (negative) ways to express their feelings and thoughts. Staff can provide this positive opportunity and encourage participation. Bringing art programs to youth who are otherwise unable to benefit from our services in the community is one objective of this program. It is also important to provide therapeutic activity and alternatives for the youth in a setting that is inherently uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and stressful.

How The Program Fulfilled Award Criteria

This program is an example of a positive and successful collaboration between state and county agencies. HCRP has the staffing, skills, and resources to provide creative and engaging programming. The Detention Home has the need to provide comprehensive services to the youth under their supervision. Joining our efforts allows us to provide a service that is desperately needed. Our efforts are positively affecting the youths' experience while incarcerated, promoting healthier life choices, and building a stronger community. By supplementing the activities that are already provided by the Detention Home, we can improve options for recreational participation without utilizing the budget of the Home as well.

How The Program Was Carried Out

Initially, staff scheduled sessions at the Detention Home once a month for 90 minutes. A meeting with the Director of the Home was scheduled to discuss possible art projects and to ensure what we provide would be appropriate for the young people currently detained. Due to the setting and nature of the clientele, it was important to always be mindful of equipment,

supplies, and mediums to ensure safety. We used the existing equipment and supplies that we have in HCRP's art studio, helping us keep costs low and ensure that projects are consistent with what we offer to all members of our community.

Due to the nature of the detention system, it is not always possible to predict which youth will be in attendance from month-to-month, so it is important to provide project content that is interesting and engaging yet still able to be completed in one session. There are often instances that some of the youth remain in the home for an extended period and will be in attendance for multiple sessions. In either situation, our goal is to keep project content interesting, challenging, and meaningful. It is often beneficial to have youth for multiple sessions as they help to make the experience more comfortable for newer detainees. It also offers us more time to reach those youth and dig deeper into their goals and hopes following release.

An additional benefit of our program is that we help the youth explore the many leisure activities that are available to them once they have been released. Through informal leisure education sessions, we talk about their interests and goals and encourage them to take advantage of the positive programs offered through HCRP. We discuss ways that they can take more responsibility for their lives, actions, and decisions through healthier leisure choices, focusing on how much control they have over their personal situations. The use of art and recreation as a therapeutic tool is a proven benefit.

We have been able to expand opportunities and content by including additional staff members and sections of HCRP including Therapeutic Recreation, Outdoors, and Nature Center staff. These staff have offered their expertise and broadened opportunities for the youth to experience new activities. Nature Center staff bring exhibit pieces and biofacts for the youth to learn about

and have a hands-on experience. This often opens dialogue between the youth and staff to share information and knowledge and interests.

In the process of building self-confidence and positive self-worth, we also encourage the youth to think beyond recreation participation and consider employment after release. We educate them on the many summer employment opportunities that are available with the county. Many of the youth we meet with have the skills and abilities to apply for one of HCRP's summer camp staff positions.

An additional collaboration with "BYDS - Before You Do Something" during this experience has opened a priceless relationship for the program. "BYDS - Before You Do Something" is a private service organization led by a gentleman who devotes his time and energy to mentoring youth at risk. His focus is building effective communication, problem solving, and anger management skills. He has gained the attention and trust of the youth and in so doing has helped our staff to gain that same trust. This has proven to be invaluable to our mission, which is to reach the youth where they are and help them to build the skills to grow from and eventually move past their experience in the detention system.

Outside of scheduled monthly programming, HCRP is currently working on developing a plan to create a permanent recreational toolbox for the youth. It will include games, books, art supplies, and other items that can be left on site and accessed throughout a youth's stay at the Home.

Financing and Staffing

Typically, two full-time staff facilitate the program once a month. This program's fiscal needs are included in the costs of our seasonally offered classes, events, and programs; therefore, it is already included in the yearly budget. The only difference in this program compared to the full roster of programs we offer is that we take it to the facility.

Program Results

Due to the nature of this program, it is difficult to quantify the success of what we can accomplish. The only "measurable" information we have is how many of the youth are in attendance each session. This number, however, isn't completely relevant since all youth in detainment are required to attend. We are not able to follow the youth once released from the program or gather any of their personal information. We do encourage the youth to contact us once released. We provide business cards with our contact information each visit.

What cannot be truly measured is what we can see while facilitating a program. We can see the youth let their guard down, begin to interact with Detention Home staff more freely, and become more engaged in the project they are working on. We can see them enjoying the projects and expressing their creativity in a positive manner. Over time, youth have become more open to seeing our staff, often greeting us with a fist bump and a smile. They are encouraged to give suggestions and requests for programs. Staff can see how engaging in a creative activity opens communication and conversation between us and the youth while also easing tension between the officers and the detainees.

Executive Summary

The Henrico County Detention Home incarcerates juveniles who are awaiting court action for committing criminal offenses. This group includes offenders, children in need of supervision, and certain traffic offenders. While housed at the detention home, juveniles are offered programs in education, recreation, and optional religious services, as well as mental health screening, evaluations, and medical services. Aside from the services required of and provided by the Detention Home, Henrico County Recreation and Parks (HCRP) staff recognized the potential to enhance opportunities for the incarcerated youth to engage in positive and effective socialization, self-expression, stress management, problem solving, and general life skill building through art programming. Our goal has been to provide an art activity – starting with visits once a month – to begin forming a relationship with the staff at the Detention Home, as well as with the youth being detained. Our initial meetings would help us determine what types of activities we could offer within the confines of the facility and what would most benefit the youth in the Home. Since its inception in January 2023, the art program has been offered monthly and has served 162 youth.