



# ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES

To connect with youth involved in the justice system  
and to change the trajectory of their lives.

## JANUARY EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

AUTAUGA CAMPUS  
TAMARA BOYD



### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR February 2026 Newsletter

Dear DYS Employees,

The legislative session is moving along rather quickly in the opening weeks of the session. Many legislators want to get back home and hit the campaign trail as 2026 in an election year. Recent legislative budget meetings forecasted revenues that may not be available to meet all the state's needs. I was told about this time last year that the '27 budget year, state agencies will be lucky if they are level funded! As we all know, level funding is actually less money when you factor in inflation. We probably all felt it last year in our personal budgets.

Why is this information about funding that will not be available until October so important for us right now? Simply stated, the decisions we make in these next nine months will either help us or hurt us in the next two fiscal years. The current budget has DYS with a 600K increase for FY27. If we give merit raises and the legislature decides to give state employees and teachers a 2% COLA – then those costs will take the entire increase in the DYS budget.

We will have to fund our current services and contracts with the same amount of funds we have this year. This will be difficult, decisions will need to be made, and priorities identified as we move forward. New programs and services that will require annual support will need to be considered carefully while existing services that are not essential or not performing may need to be discontinued in future years.

2026 is an excellent time for DYS to get back to basics. Maybe we don't get the shiny new program, but howw can we work on the daily no-cost, low-cost activities, protocols and practices to make our jobs better and more effective. We may not be able to do anything new, but we can make what we do every day better!

Let's begin 2026 with a renewed commitment to get Back to the Basics and be a stronger department despite any future fiscal challenges.

Thank you for all that you do!

Sincerely,

Steve Lafreniere

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**MISSION:** To be a life changing resource for youth involved in the justice system by providing quality educational opportunities, services, and supports to reduce reoffending, improve positive outcomes, strengthen families, and enhance community safety.

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## Welcome New DYS Employees! January 2026 New Employee Orientation Ceremony

Linda Adderly - Mt. Meigs Campus

Natalie Boykin - Central Office

Harmony Comer - Mt. Meigs Campus

Tiffany Guice - Mt. Meigs Campus

Matthew Idoda - Mt. Meigs Campus

Shquil Yates - Vacca Campus



## Congratulations to Ms. Connie Rich! Retiring from DYS after 25 Years of State Service!



DYS is delighted to celebrate and congratulate Ms. Connie Rich, Human Resources Manager, on her outstanding career and well-deserved retirement. With 25 years of dedicated service in state government, Ms. Rich has been an invaluable member of the DYS team for many years. On January 30th, she officially retired, closing an important chapter of leadership and commitment.

We will greatly miss her presence in the workplace. Everyone at DYS extends our heartfelt thanks for her many contributions over the years and wishes her a joyful, healthy, and fulfilling retirement. Thank you, Ms. Rich, for everything you have done. We are truly grateful. Congratulations and best wishes!

## **IT Gets Recognized for their Hard Work Helping Diversion Programs Across the State**

The IT team has been instrumental in developing databases and platforms that Diversion programs across the state use to capture usage data. The work they have done to enhance the GIMS (Grantee Information System) for diversion programs has enabled programs to capture data that is used to create reports that provide the programs feedback on their census, outcomes, success rates, as well as other demographic information. This data has been used to strengthen programs state wide, help DYS determine when and if they should redistribute funds in a more cost effective and beneficial way, and enabled the Diversion Leadership to decrease the time needed for the performance feedback loop. It has also freed up some of the administrative and clinical staff time, which has enabled them to focus more on the work they do with families and clients. While there is always a lot of focus on the work we do with children, the truth is that the IT team are the unsung heroes at DYS. They are rarely recognized unless there is a problem. They are often in the shadows, calmly providing support and correcting all the goofs that everyone has along the way. The 50+ Community Diversion programs wanted to take the opportunity to thank them for their commitment, patience, and steady problem solving approach to their work. Thank you IT Dept!



### **Upcoming Events for DYS**

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|--------------------------|---|
| <b>February 4th -</b>    | Vacca Incident Report Training  |
| <b>February 10th -</b>   | Birmingham Career Center Job Fair   |
| <b>February 10th -</b>   | Autauga Incident Report Training  |
| <b>February 19th -</b>   | Montgomery State Agency Career Fair   |
| <b>February 26th -</b>   | Montgomery Career Center Job Fair   |
| <b>March 3rd - 4th -</b> | Center for Improving Youth Justice (PbS) Site Visit<br>Mt. Meigs and Vacca Campuses |
| <b>March 27th -</b>      | DYS Board Meeting   |



## Our Values.....

### **Safety & Accountability**

We believe a safe environment is everyone's responsibility and is foundational for individual and programmatic success.

### **Character & Integrity**

We believe the behavior we desire in others should first be seen through our own actions.

### **Communication & Collaboration**

We share ideas freely and courageously. We embrace the potential of new ideas and approaches.

### **Respect & Connection**

We believe youth and staff become meaningfully engaged through respectful relationships that are consistent, compassionate, and fair.

### **Empowerment & Discovery**

We create opportunities for others to learn, engage, and transform.

### **Equity & Inclusion**

We embrace our diversity, believing it transforms us and our community.

### **Transparency & Excellence**

We are committed to being informed by data to improve the quality of our efforts and accountability to our stakeholders.

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