

**City of Alexandria, Virginia  
FY 2025 Proposed Operating Budget & CIP  
Budget Questions & Answers**

**April 15, 2024**

**Question:**

What impact would the reduced City funding have on NVJDC operations? How much of NVJDC's utilization is due to lack of capacity in alternative programs?

**Response:**

- **What impact would the reduced City funding have on NVJDC operations?**

The City's FY 2025 proposed budget includes a \$645,584 increase in General Fund support of the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center (NVJDC), which is a 40% increase over the current year but is \$262,165 less than requested by the Center. The NVJDC FY 2025 budget of \$5.8 million is supported by \$4.2 million from the jurisdictions of Alexandria, Arlington, and Falls Church and \$1.5 million from other sources, primarily the Commonwealth of Virginia. Over the past three fiscal years, those revenues from other sources have averaged over \$2.0 million. Any revenue received in FY 2025 over the amount conservatively estimated by the NVJDC could reduce the amount required from the jurisdictions and the gap between the City budgeted and the NVJDC requested amount.

The City contributes its share on a quarterly basis and can adjust its contribution over the course of the fiscal year if other sources do not materialize. If other sources do not materialize and the City does not increase its contribution, the NVJDC would need to reduce expenditures and may face difficulties in adequately staffing key positions, leading to increased workloads and potential burnout among existing staff, difficulties in investing in critical programs for residents and professional development opportunities, and difficulties in procuring and maintaining essential equipment and infrastructure. However, despite these challenges, it's important to note that NVJDC is focused on strategies to mitigate the impact of reduced funding on operational requirements. These strategies may include prioritizing spending based on critical needs, exploring alternative funding sources such as grants or partnerships, implementing cost-saving measures, and fostering a culture of innovation and efficiency within the organization.

Ultimately, proactive planning, resource allocation, and innovative solutions can help ensure that essential operational requirements are met to the best of NVJDC's abilities.

- **How much of NVJDC's utilization is due to lack of capacity in alternative programs?**

Some elements of NVJDC's utilization are due to the limitation in capacity within alternative programs and the need for additional resources. However, the primary reason is attributed to an overall increase in crime and detainable offenses committed by youth.

The Court Services Unit (CSU) utilizes a required, structured decision-making tool to inform immediate decisions regarding placement at the time of arrest. The Court explores options and resources within the community when making these decisions. The overall rise in crime rates has also resulted in increases in the use of available resources such as Sheltercare, electronic monitoring, and longer-term placements, which involve complex and lengthy processes. At the same time, gaps are apparent related to substance use disorder crises and expanded programming.

Alexandria and Arlington Court Services Units primarily utilize Sheltercare as the immediate placement alternative to detention. Corresponding with the uptick in detention utilization, the availability of Sheltercare has been more limited than in times past given the increase in its usage. Sheltercare currently has a capacity of 14 beds for males and females (adjusted during the pandemic and recently) and has more regularly had a waiting list. Occasionally, youth may be placed in or remain in detention pending an available bed at Sheltercare. These placements are typically expedited. One consideration that is consistent with increasing alternatives to detention includes the potential expansion of Sheltercare to Unit 7, which is a currently unused and unsecured space at NVJDC. NVJDC and Sheltercare staff are exploring this option with the Commission, with the goal of making a recommendation (including any fiscal impact) by fall 2024.

To address recent placement limitations, adjustments have also been implemented in electronic monitoring protocols and supply systems. Efforts are being made to review ongoing alternatives and consider additional opportunities such as the Detention Diversion Program in Arlington.

Finally, the increase in the use of detention has also been impacted by an increase in youth coming before the Court with significant substance use concerns, specifically opioids/fentanyl. These are also often accompanied by mental health issues. With such cases, a primary concern is on the youth's safety and identifying the appropriate recommendation for treatment. Ideally, an inpatient detoxification program would be recommended where the youth could safely withdraw from the substances with medical oversight. However, while planning is occurring to address this need, such a resource currently does not exist for youth in the City of Alexandria or the greater Northern Virginia region. As a result, youth may be placed in detention for their own safety pending the complex process of necessary assessments and placement considerations.

Input from professionals from multiple entities indicates a need for more services to address substance abuse and mental health concerns, including community-based, outpatient or in-home services, as well as enough or appropriate residential opportunities.