



OAJCJ Members,

April 2, 2026

The Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) will be suspending intake for the northern region at our Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility for the month of April. The staffing shortages are requiring a suspension of youth admissions and a reduction in the number of youths served on the Indian River campus.

I have had the opportunity to speak with many of you directly, and I appreciate the understanding and support that you have provided. I am grateful for the conversation, and I will continue to keep lines of communication open and transparent. The purpose of this suspension is directly tied to staff safety and the wellness of the youth served at Indian River. The imbalance of a full facility youth population with a high number of staff vacancies and staff off work is having an impact on both the youth and the staff. Until staffing numbers improve, the number of youths served on that campus will be reduced.

You have my full commitment that we will remain diligent in our ongoing recruitment and retention efforts, as well as in our commitment to providing a rigorous preservice and on-the-job training program for our new staff. Additionally, for those of you who may not know, Superintendent Kenny Black has resigned from Indian River. Kenny was retired from DRC when he joined DHS nearly two years ago, and I'm certainly grateful for his work and dedication to improving the conditions at Indian River. As a result, our national search for Kenny's replacement is underway, and I will keep you updated as that progresses. Deputy Director Chris Freeman will serve as interim Superintendent during this time.

Although we have challenges that come with serving the highest risk, highest needs youth in the state of Ohio, challenges that I know you collectively understand, make no mistake, there are many positive things happening in DHS and I encourage you to follow us on social media to get an up-close view into the work we're doing along with the amazing partnerships we have formed. I also want to extend an invitation to all of you to visit any of our three facilities at any time your schedule permits. Every month when I'm in the facilities, without question, a youth will ask me, "Do you know my judge?" or "Can you let my judge know how good I'm doing?" Seeing you and hearing from you means a lot to so many of them. As a reminder, we have our spring high school graduations coming up in the next month, and we are on track to have a record number of graduates at DHS. If you have a young man graduating, you will receive a graduation invitation; we sure would love to have you or members of your court to join our staff and the families of the graduates in this celebration.

Thank you again for your understanding. I will certainly keep all of you updated as we approach the end of April; I will provide a status update that will either guide us back to business as usual or continue with the intake suspension for an additional month.

Should you have any questions, please direct them to Ricky Sansom-Seyfang, Bureau Chief of Records & Sentence Computation, or you can always call me directly.

Thank you again.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy L. Ast".

Director Ast