

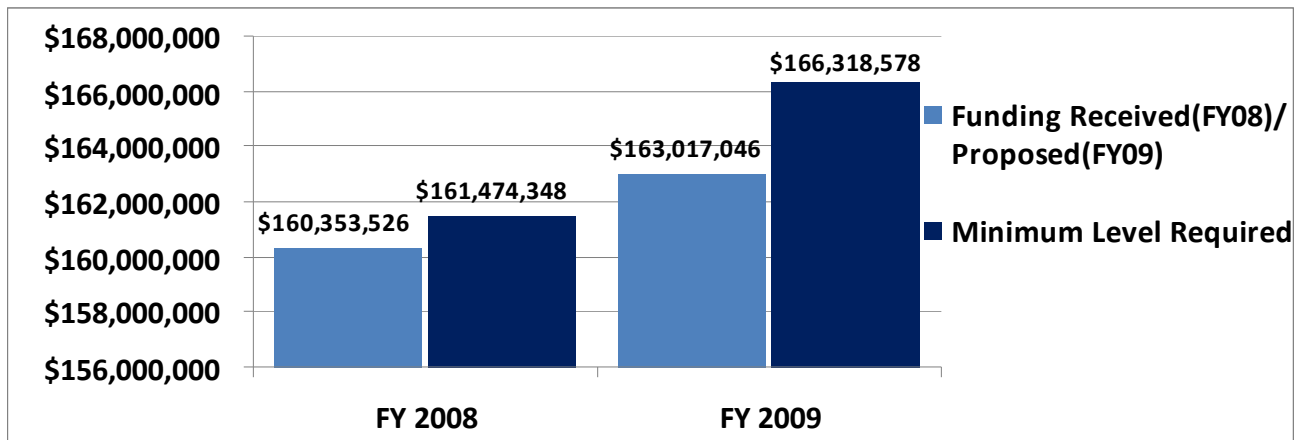
## The Problem

**The Department of Youth Services (DYS) has not been receiving sufficient funds to support effective programs to rehabilitate youth and successfully transition them back to our communities.**

**Further shortfalls in FY2009 will cause a crisis at DYS: Compromising the care of the children and youth served and the safety of the public.**

**Recent and proposed funding for DYS has dropped below what is needed just to maintain current programs.**

- \* DYS requires a 3 percent funding increase each year just to maintain current levels of operations.
- \* In FY 2008, DYS received a funding increase of only 2 percent, approximately \$1.1 million less than required to maintain its operations.
- \* The Governor's proposed budget for FY 2009 provides only a 1.6 percent increase over FY 2008.



**In FY 2008, as a result of funding shortfalls, DYS closed 4 programs:** A contracted girls' detention program in Springfield, a contracted girls' assessment program in Boston, a contracted boys' short-term treatment program in the Southeast, and a state-operated boys' secure program in Grafton.

**This reduction in available residential placements hinders placement flexibility,** making it difficult, for example, to separate older youth from younger children or members of rival gangs. Further, **the availability of specialized services (e.g., substance abuse treatment) is decreased or lost.**

**DYS currently lacks the funds to provide the full continuum of rehabilitative care for the youth in its custody.** There are not enough placements available to transition youth from secure custody to community based settings.

**If funded at the insufficient level proposed in the Governor's budget, DYS will be forced to close additional critically-needed programs in FY 2009.**

**Salaries for direct care staff in DYS contracted programs are insufficient to recruit and retain a qualified direct care workforce.**

- \* The direct care staff starting wage is \$24,000 annually or about \$11.50 per hour. In similar programs funded by DSS, the direct care staff starting wage is \$28,000 or about \$13.50 per hour. In private residential schools, it averages about \$31,000. In general, DYS youth are more behaviorally challenging than DSS youth.
- \* Two recent reports by the Donahue Institute at UMass detail the impact of low salaries in recruiting qualified staff at a time when demand for direct care workers is increasing significantly.
- \* In FY 2008, some treatment programs had a 100 percent turnover of employees.
- \* Inability to recruit and retain staff results in critical staff vacancies, increased program incidents, staff burn-out, lack of properly trained staff, and, ultimately, ineffective rehabilitation and higher recidivism.
- \* Increasing salaries to competitive levels can solve the staff quality and turnover problems. When the legislature supported competitive salaries for educators and clinicians in DYS programs, positions were filled, turnover dropped, and professional quality rose. Moreover, positive outcomes resulted, including: increase in high school graduation rates, rates of obtaining GEDs and passing MCAS , and improved mental health .

**Lack of adequate funding will impede DYS' detention reform efforts:** DYS has taken a leadership role in implementing a national model of detention reform in Massachusetts. Continued progress on this front requires consistent budgetary support.

**Insufficient funding for DYS will inevitably diminish its ability to rehabilitate troubled youth — and youth who are not successfully rehabilitated will impose steep costs, both social and fiscal, on the Commonwealth in the future.**

## The Solution

**At a minimum, the DYS budget must be increased to \$167 million to save existing programs, recruit and retain direct care staff, and provide effective services.**