

Maryland Department of Juvenile Services Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) 2024 Annual Report

August 2026

Our Mission
To empower youth and advance public safety through opportunity, accountability, and community partnership.

Our Vision
Empowered youth. Strong families. Safe communities.

Our Values
Collaboration • Developmental Approach • Transparency • Equity

Introduction

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) has prepared this report as part of its efforts to comply with the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). Pursuant to PREA, DJS is required to prepare an annual report that includes certain sexual abuse incident data from facilities under its direct control and private facilities with which it contracts.[1] PREA also requires DJS to share findings and corrective actions for DJS-operated facilities and its contract facilities, along with an assessment of the agency's progress in addressing sexual abuse.

DJS has zero tolerance for all forms of sexual abuse and harassment against any youth in its custody, as outlined in DJS Policy RF-701-26, *Elimination and Reporting of Sexual Abuse and Harassment - PREA Juvenile Facility Standards Compliance*. DJS recognizes the importance of ensuring that youth who are in custody are aware of their right to sexual safety, the agency's commitment to achieving a safe environment for youth and staff, and the ways to report any concerns or problems.

As reflected in this report, DJS continues its efforts to promote the safety and well-being of the youth we serve. Our continued work on compliance with the PREA standards reflects our commitment to empowering youth to understand and exercise their rights and our ongoing transparency regarding DJS's efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment in any form.



Elizabeth Fox Tolentino, Secretary
Maryland Department of Juvenile Services

[1] 28 C.F.R. §§ 115.387, 115.388, and 115.389.

I. Agency-Wide Progress in Promoting Sexual Safety at the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services

The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services continues to advance its policy of zero tolerance for any form of sexual abuse and sexual harassment, as reflected in the activities and corrective actions outlined below. The activities described below focus on measures taken to enhance PREA compliance under the administration of DJS Secretary Elizabeth Fox Tolentino.[2]

- DJS conducted a comprehensive review of its agency-wide PREA policy and published a revised version in June 2026. The revised policy included clarifications regarding mandated reporting responsibilities and required notifications to collaborating agencies, among other revisions. A specific rule about hugging is also included in the updated policy.

- DJS doubled the size of its PREA compliance unit, hiring an Assistant PREA Coordinator to expand the support the agency provides to its residential facilities.

- DJS engaged in a comprehensive review of all facilities where youth are placed and identified additional facilities that qualify as "juvenile facilities" under the PREA standards. DJS worked with these facilities on PREA compliance, and all of them were audited and found to be in full compliance with the PREA standards.

- DJS strengthened the ability of its Licensing and Monitoring unit to monitor PREA compliance in private contracted facilities during non-audit years, through training of Licensing and Monitoring staff and the development of new tools to assist with assessment of PREA compliance during site visits.

[2] Secretary Tolentino was appointed as Acting Secretary by Governor Wes Moore on June 9, 2025, and was confirmed by the Maryland General Assembly as permanent Secretary on February 27, 2026.

- Through its regular review of incidents, DJS identified a need to reinforce appropriate boundaries between staff and youth and highlight warning signs of actual or potential victimization. In its updated staff refresher training, DJS incorporated additional discussion of red flags, strategies for maintaining appropriate boundaries, and the importance of addressing behaviors that can undermine a sexually safe culture.

- DJS strengthened expectations for its PREA post-incident review process by building in additional structure to facilitate reflections on possible missed opportunities and specificity about how such incidents should inform adjustments to supervision, guidance to staff, practice and policy.

- DJS continued to strengthen its collaboration with the Maryland State Police (MSP), which is DJS's primary law enforcement partner. This has included new outreach to MSP barracks serving counties where DJS facilities are located to forge stronger relationships, as well as leadership-level collaboration.

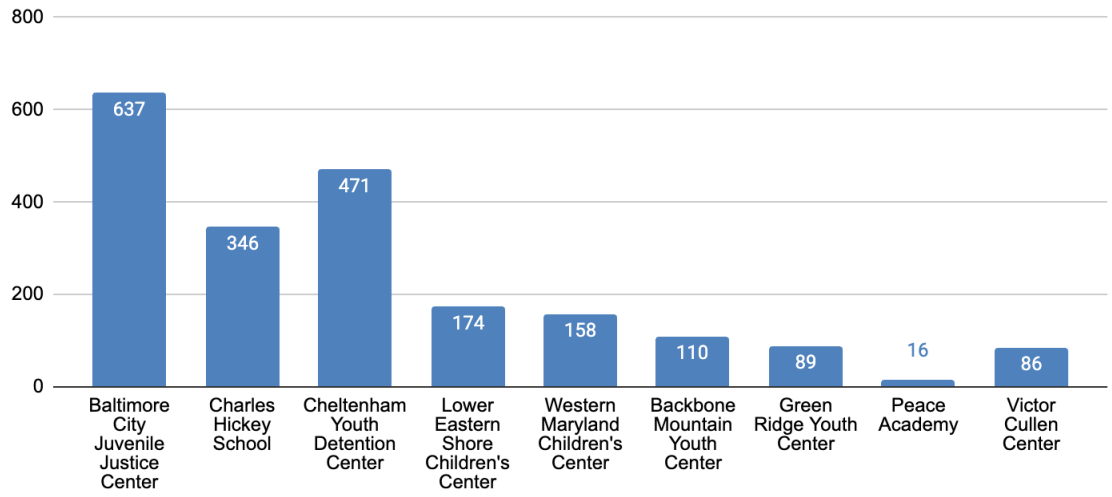
II. Data and Corrective Action in DJS-Operated Facilities

Quantitative data in this report focus on the 2024 calendar year.[3] Data from the prior two calendar years are included for comparison with respect to allegations of sexual harassment and sexual abuse and the disposition of those allegations.[4] The corrective actions described below address incidents that occurred during the 2024 calendar year.

A. Data

Youth population data are presented to provide context for the 2024 calendar year. Figure 1 captures admissions to each DJS-operated facility, and Figure 2 captures the average daily population (ADP) in each DJS-operated facility.

Figure 1. Admissions



[3] DJS compiles data for allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment in compliance with 28 C.F.R. § 115.387 and the requirements for the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ's) Survey of Sexual Victimization. DJS will compile and submit calendar year 2025 data in December 2026 as required by the DOJ.

[4] To allow for comparison with prior years, youth-on-youth sexual abuse rates for 2023 and later are compared with a combined measure of nonconsensual sexual acts and abusive sexual contact reported in 2022 and earlier. Beginning with the 2023 Bureau of Justice Statistics Survey of Sexual Victimization, these categories were combined into a single "sexual abuse" category to align with PREA definitions. Similarly, staff-on-youth sexual abuse rates for 2023 and later are compared with a combined measure of staff sexual misconduct labeled nonconsensual sexual acts and abusive sexual contact reported in 2022 and earlier. Beginning with the 2023 Bureau of Justice Statistics Survey of Sexual Victimization, these incidents are reported as "staff sexual abuse" to align with PREA definitions.

Figure 2. Average Daily Population

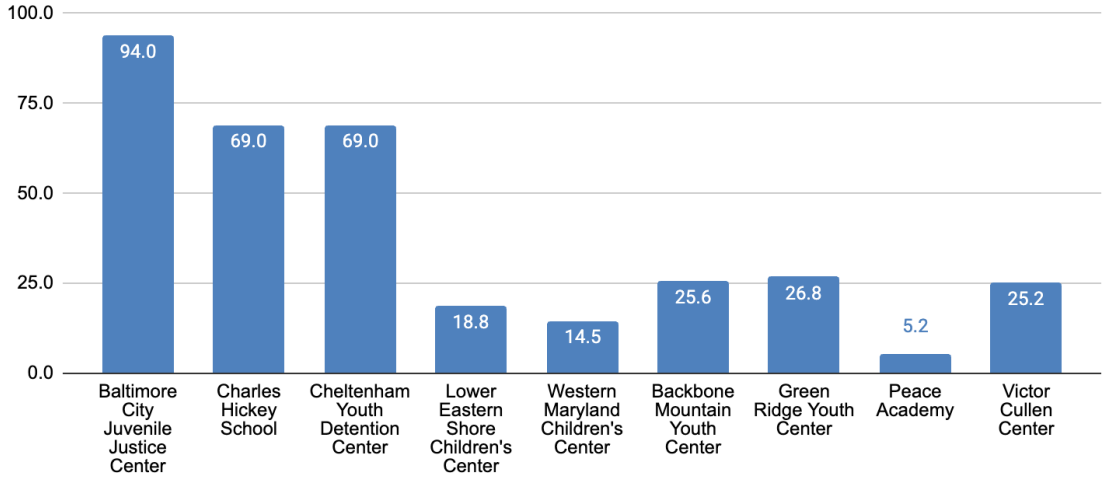
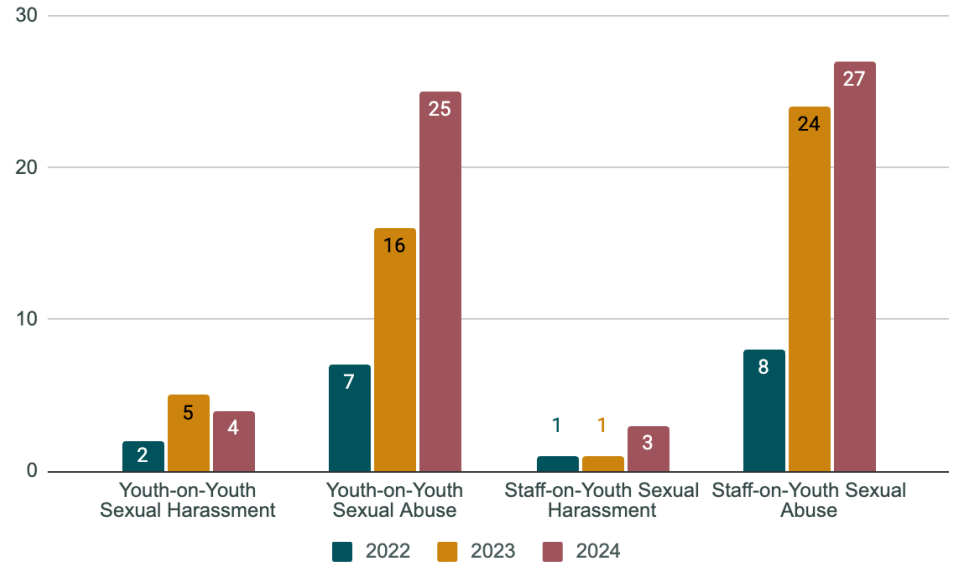


Figure 3 compares the number of allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment[5] made by youth in DJS-operated facilities during calendar year 2024 relative to the previous two calendar years.

Figure 3. Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Allegations Reported by Youth in DJS-Operated Facilities



[5] DJS compiles data for allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment using definitions from the Survey of Sexual Victimization (SSV). These definitions are included in the Appendix to this report. As part of the preparation of this report and review of reported incidents, DJS determined that the agency's 2024 SSV report to the DOJ slightly overreported incidents that did not meet PREA's definition for youth-on-youth sexual abuse. The data in this report reflect the removal of 4 youth-on-youth sexual abuse allegations (all of which were determined to be unsubstantiated) from the figure reported to DOJ in the 2024 SSV.

Figure 4 provides the raw numbers of allegations made by youth in each DJS-operated facility during the 2024 calendar year.

Figure 4. Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Allegations by DJS-Operated Facility

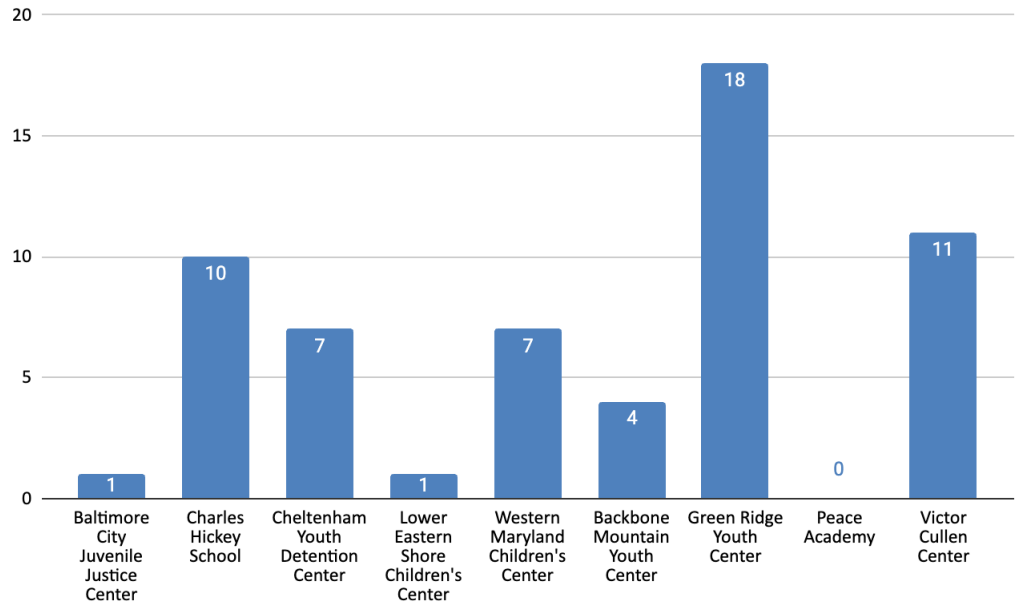
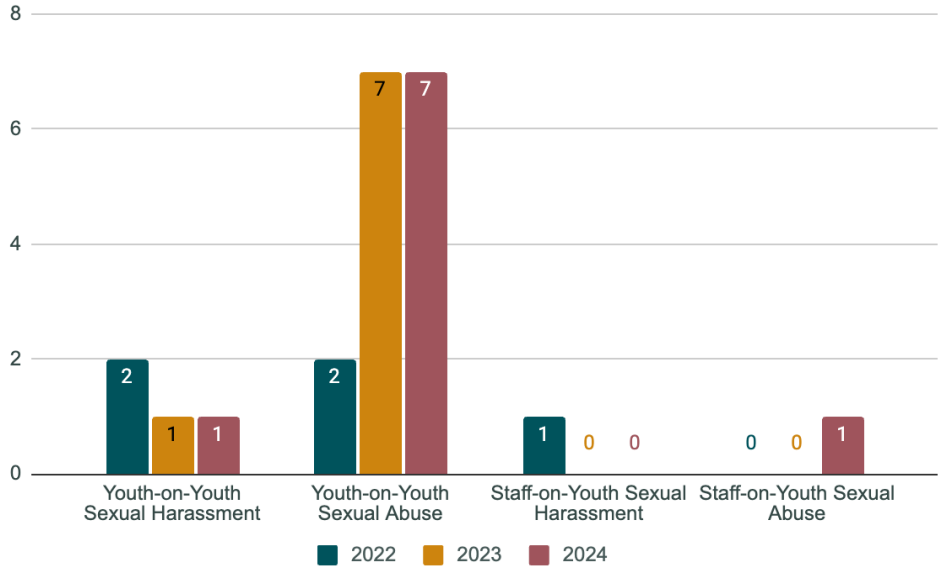


Figure 5 compares substantiated sexual abuse and harassment allegations in 2024 with the previous two calendar years.

Figure 5. Substantiated Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Allegations



B. Agency Response and Corrective Actions

DJS's response to allegations in calendar year 2024 was consistent with the approach outlined in its 2023 annual report.[6] This approach includes:

- Ensuring that staff and youth report incidents of suspected or actual sexual abuse and sexual harassment;
- Referring allegations for investigation, as appropriate, to the Maryland State Police, Child Protective Services, and the DJS Office of the Inspector General;
- Offering youth medical, behavioral health, and other supportive services; and
- Conducting reviews of incidents to identify needed corrective actions at both the facility and agency level.

Facility-based corrective actions resulting from reviews of substantiated and unsubstantiated incidents are outlined below.

Facility	**Summary of Incidents**	**Corrective Actions**
Charles Hickey School	Youth-on-youth unwanted touching	Separation of youth and counseling/reminder of facility rules; reinforcement of PREA policy requirements for active staff supervision and intervention/redirection of inappropriate youth behavior
Western Maryland Children's Center	Youth-on-youth consensual sexual activity	Separation of youth and counseling/reminder of facility rules; reinforcement of PREA policy requirements for active staff supervision and intervention/redirection of inappropriate youth behavior

[6] Maryland Department of Juvenile Services Prison Rape Elimination Act 2023 Annual Report*, available at* https://djs.maryland.gov/media/109.

Facility	Summary of Incidents	Corrective Actions
Cheltenham Youth Detention Center	Youth-on-youth unwanted touching Staff-on-youth sexual abuse	Separation of youth and counseling/reminder of facility rules; reinforcement of PREA policy requirements for active staff supervision and intervention/redirection of inappropriate youth behavior Staff member involved in the staff-on-youth sexual abuse allegation was terminated following an agency investigation; agency conducted staff retraining on appropriate boundaries, standards of professional conduct, and agency PREA policy during staff meetings, shift status updates, and briefing meetings
Backbone Mountain Youth Center	Youth-on-youth unwanted touching	Separation of youth and counseling/reminder of facility rules; reinforcement of PREA policy requirements for active staff supervision and intervention/redirection of inappropriate youth behavior
Green Ridge Youth Center	Youth-on-youth unwanted touching	Separation of youth and counseling/reminder of facility rules; reinforcement of PREA policy requirements for active staff supervision and intervention/redirection of inappropriate youth behavior
Victor Cullen Center	Youth-on-youth unwanted touching	Separation of youth and counseling/reminder of facility rules; reinforcement of PREA policy requirements for active staff supervision and intervention/redirection of inappropriate youth behavior

III. Data and Corrective Actions in DJS Contract Facilities

Quantitative data focus on the 2024 calendar year. Data from the prior two calendar years are included for comparison with respect to allegations of sexual harassment and sexual abuse.[7] The corrective actions described below focus on responses to incidents that occurred during the 2024 calendar year.

A. Data

In 2024, DJS had an average daily population of 72.4 youth in contracted private facilities and 104 admissions to those facilities.

Figure 6 summarizes the number of allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment reported by youth in DJS contracted facilities during calendar year 2024 as compared with the previous two calendar years.

Figure 6. Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment Allegations Reported by Youth in DJS Contract Facilities



[7] To allow for comparison with prior years, youth-on-youth sexual abuse rates for 2023 and later are compared with a combined measure of nonconsensual sexual acts and abusive sexual contact reported in 2022 and earlier. Beginning with the 2023 Bureau of Justice Statistics Survey of Sexual Victimization, these categories were combined into a single "sexual abuse" category to align with PREA definitions. Similarly, staff-on-youth sexual abuse rates for 2023 and later are compared with a combined measure of staff sexual misconduct involving nonconsensual sexual acts and abusive sexual contact reported in 2022 and earlier. Beginning with the 2023 Bureau of Justice Statistics Survey of Sexual Victimization, these incidents are reported as "staff sexual abuse" to align with PREA definitions.

B. Agency Response and Corrective Actions

DJS monitors services and conditions for youth in contracted private facilities through its Licensing and Monitoring Unit and through contract management by the Resource Unit. In 2024, two allegations of staff-on-youth sexual abuse were determined to be unsubstantiated following investigations by the provider agency and DJS. No additional corrective action was deemed necessary.

Appendix

DJS reports data regarding reports of alleged sexual abuse and sexual harrassment using the following definitions, which are drawn from the Survey of Sexual Victimization conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice.

Allegations

Youth-on-Youth Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of a youth by another youth includes any of the following acts, if the victim does not consent, is coerced into such act by overt or implied threats of violence, or is
unable to consent or refuse:
(1) Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight;
(2) Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus;
(3) Penetration of the anal or genital opening of another person, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument; and
(4) Any other intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or the buttocks of another person, excluding contact incidental to a physical altercation.

Youth-on-Youth Sexual Harassment

Repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal comments, gestures, or actions of a derogatory or offensive sexual nature by one youth directed toward another.

Staff-on-Youth Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse of a youth, detainee, or resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer includes any of the following acts, with or without consent of the youth, detainee, or resident:
(1) Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight;
(2) Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus;

(3) Contact between the mouth and any body part where the staff member, contractor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
(4) Penetration of the anal or genital opening, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument, that is unrelated to official duties or where the staff member, contractor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
(5) Any other intentional contact, either directly or through the clothing, of or with the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or the buttocks, that is unrelated to official duties or where the staff member, contractor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
(6) Any attempt, threat, or request by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer to engage in the activities described in paragraphs (1)–(5) of this section;
(7) Any display by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer of his or her uncovered genitalia, buttocks, or breast in the presence of a youth, detainee, or resident, and
(8) Voyeurism by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer.

Staff-on-Youth Sexual Harassment

Repeated verbal comments or gestures of a sexual nature to a youth by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, including demeaning references to sex, sexually suggestive or derogatory comments about body or clothing, or obscene language or gestures.

Dispositions

Substantiated: The event was investigated and determined to have occurred, based on a preponderance of the evidence.

Unsubstantiated: The investigation concluded that evidence was insufficient to determine whether or not the event occurred.

Unfounded: The investigation determined that the event did not occur.