

James River Juvenile Detention Center

History

Between 1992 and 1995, the average number of admissions to juvenile detention centers in Henrico, Powhatan and Goochland Counties was 427.75, reflecting a growth rate of 16.72 percent. By 2005, Henrico County projected an increase of 17.8 percent, while Powhatan projected a 36.4 percent increase. Goochland County projected an increase due to experiencing industrial expansion, upon which additional increases were contingent. The three localities united to build a jointly owned and operated juvenile detention facility, forging in the process a new level of intergovernmental savings for taxpayers in all three jurisdictions.

Each county, in assessing its own problem, sought a sound, cost-effective alternative approach to juvenile detention. The counties recognized a need to keep pre and post adjudicated youths close to their home communities so families could be engaged in the rehabilitation process through visitation and counseling services. A needs assessment conducted by the Department of Juvenile Justice in 1996 confirmed the three localities issue of inadequate space for detaining juveniles.

Each county, however, encountered community opposition to proposed detention facilities locations. At this juncture, officials from the three jurisdictions turned to a partnership, forming a joint commission in August 1996. The commission is comprised on three county administrators, one from each county, one deputy county administrator (Henrico County) and one commonwealth attorney. In October 1996 the commission members were sworn in and the by-laws adopted.

Assisting this initiative, Virginia's Department of Juvenile Justice helped the commission purchase excess state owned land in Powhatan County in 1998. The contractual contract was awarded in February 1999 and ground breaking occurred in April 1999 with substantial completion on April 12, 2001. On April 15, 2001, James River received its first 25 residents. James River is a 47,884 square foot, 60 bed detention center.

On June 2, 2012, Michael D. Martin was hired as Superintendent of the Detention Center. In 2012, the detention center completed a security systems upgrade which added additional cameras, touchscreen monitors, servers and software to the institutional security system. The average number of admissions in 2012 was 850, an increase of 99% from 1995. From 2012 to 2015, during the recession the average number of admissions declined 18.90% to 689. In 2014, the facility was audited and re-certified by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) for 3 years.

In 2015, the Detention Center began an initiative to meet Federal requirements to become compliant with Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) requirements. This initiative includes an increase in coverage (staff per detainee), sexual assault training, increased/recurring background checks every 5 years, and improved reporting. Federal compliance will be required; an audit will be conducted every 3 years.