

**Johnson Youth Center Renovation and Remodel to Meet
Safety and Security Needs - Phase 1**

**FY2011 Request: \$9,880,000
Reference No: 42830**

AP/AL: Appropriation

Project Type: Renovation and Remodeling

Category: Health/Human Services

Location: Juneau Areawide

Contact: Arnold Liebelt

House District: Juneau Areawide (HD 3-4)

Contact Phone: (907)465-1870

Estimated Project Dates: 07/01/2010 - 06/30/2015

Brief Summary and Statement of Need:

This request includes renovation and expansion of the detention unit, a new medical suite, and a new admissions and police entry. Threats to safety and security result from aging infrastructure, overcrowding, and an increase in behavioral health issues. This project supports the department's mission "To promote and protect the health and well being of Alaskans."

Funding:	<u>FY2011</u>	<u>FY2012</u>	<u>FY2013</u>	<u>FY2014</u>	<u>FY2015</u>	<u>FY2016</u>	<u>Total</u>
Gen Fund	\$9,880,000						\$9,880,000
Total:	\$9,880,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$9,880,000

<input type="checkbox"/> State Match Required	<input type="checkbox"/> One-Time Project	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phased - new	<input type="checkbox"/> Phased - underway	<input type="checkbox"/> On-Going
0% = Minimum State Match % Required		<input type="checkbox"/> Amendment	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Bill	

Operating & Maintenance Costs:

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Project Development:	0	0
Ongoing Operating:	0	0
One-Time Startup:	0	0
Totals:	0	0

Additional Information / Prior Funding History:

This is the first year of the project.

Project Description/Justification:

The Johnson Youth Center was part of an assessment study performed in the summer of 2007 on the Division of Juvenile Justice's four oldest youth facilities. The other three youth facilities are the McLaughlin Youth Center in Anchorage, the Bethel Youth Facility, and the Fairbanks Youth Facility. The study was commissioned to identify safety and security deficiencies within these facilities. The consultant provided a summary of findings, recommendations, and estimated construction costs for each deficiency for each facility.

In 1997, the Department completed its first *Master Plan for Youth Facilities*. The plan was instrumental in securing funds for expanding services and bed capacity in various communities. As a result of the plan, new youth facilities were constructed in Ketchikan, Mat-Su, and Kenai, and additional treatment or detention beds were added to the Johnson Youth Center and the McLaughlin Youth Center. Whereas the Master Plan focused on the need for beds in specific communities, the 2007 Assessment Study focuses on the safety and security needs of the four oldest youth facilities in the state. Threats to safety and security result from aging infrastructure, overcrowding, and an increase in behavioral health issues. The current plan for addressing these deficiencies is as follows:

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Threat to Safety and Security: An Assessment of Security Needs for Alaska's Juvenile Correctional Facilities

Facility	FY2011	FY2012	FY2013	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017
McLaughlin					\$21,136.0	\$13,851.0	\$25,689.1
Johnson	\$9,880.0			\$3,850.2	\$4,913.2		
Fairbanks				\$11,977.1		\$15,607.7	
Bethel		\$32,268.5	\$27,587.5				
Total	\$9,880.0	\$32,268.5	\$27,587.5	\$15,827.3	\$26,049.2	29,458.7	\$25,689.1

This request is for phase 1 (\$9,880.0) of 3 with a total project cost of \$18,643.4.

The current structures on the Johnson Youth Center campus are an eclectic mix of old and new buildings. They include a former adult female jail that was built in the late 1960's, a programs building that was constructed in 1990 and the more recently constructed treatment cottage. The program and treatment facilities are serving the population well and, with few exceptions, provide safe and secure environments for the programs they house. The detention unit, however, does not support its mission and is the root of threats to safety and security.

The existing Johnson Youth Center detention unit was constructed in the late 1960's as an adult female jail. The women's incarceration program used their cells as the primary space in which they were held. Consequently, the women prisoners spent most of their days in locked cells. This approach, and resulting housing configuration, is not supportive of the programs being used with the adolescent residents of the detention program. The Johnson Youth Center cells are grouped into three separate mini-pods. There is limited visual access of the cell fronts from any given staff position, compromising observation and staff oversight of the residents. This basic underlying inefficiency is compounded by an antiquated door locking system that uses paracentric locks. The fact that the unit is occasionally occupied by both boys and girls greatly increases the need for observation. This combination of poor visual control, poor door control and adolescent coed occupancy results in a very ineffective detention unit that is difficult to manage and unsafe to inhabit.

As is recognized in all the State's youth facilities, there has been a significant increase in the percentage and level of individuals experiencing mental health illness. This increases the threat of physical violence against staff and residents through irrational acting out and aggression. Southeast Alaska has an unusually high level of adjudicated youngsters with substance abuse problems, again leading to a high level of irrational and often aggressive behavior toward the residents and staff.

The detention unit also has other safety and security issues. The building that houses detention also provides office space for probation offices, police admissions and the administration offices. The semi-secure spaces are over-populated, leading to violation of building code occupancy load. The secure detention areas are divided into multiple incongruous rooms and spaces. The eight resident cells are in three separate spaces with two dayrooms. This organization makes monitoring the sometimes irrational residents very difficult for staff, leading to a disproportionate amount of time spent monitoring and observing rather than counseling and mentoring. The detention structure itself is poorly equipped to resist physical abuse. The large cell windows are not glazed with appropriate security glass and the single doors leading from the secure unit to the yards and offices are secured with commercial grade doors and locks without the recommended sally ports.

The facility's perimeter security system is seriously lacking and provides little in the way of controlling escape, the introduction of contraband or violence against residents from outside the fenced facility. There were two escapes during the past two years. This was attributed to poor security fencing and a poor HVAC system. The rooms become so hot during the summer that the staff needs to keep doors open for cooling. As a result, the juveniles were able to escape into the outdoor recreation yard, scale up the wall and fencing, and escape. In the winter, the heating is inadequate to keep the rooms at a comfortable temperature.

The young people who are ordered by the court to live in the State's youth facilities are there so they cannot harm other members of the community. Intense proactive counseling and individual programming is administered in an attempt to alter behavior patterns before they are ingrained. If the institutions are not safe and the residents feel threatened, the Department cannot expect the therapeutic work to have any effect on these youngsters. It is imperative that these facilities be safe if we expect positive results from the staff's dedicated work. The State's juvenile justice infrastructure is an important component of maintaining public safety and a last chance to habilitate our youth to be responsible members of their community. That investment not only protects our citizens today but also reduces any future threat.