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DHSS to close Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility

Youth will be transferred to Juneau; 15 staff members to be laid off

ANCHORAGE —The Department of Health and Social Services has made the decision to close the Ketchikan Regional Youth Facility, effective Sept. 15, 2016.

Youth from the Ketchikan area who need secure detention services will be transported to Juneau and placed in the Johnson Youth Center. Youth currently in the facility, their families, community leaders and affected staff were notified last week.

Fifteen full-time state employees with the Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) received lay-off notices, and the state is working with these employees to help them find new employment. In addition, one facility position will be reassigned to the DJJ probation office in Ketchikan.

“This was a very difficult decision for us,” said DHSS Commissioner Valerie Davidson. “Youth in detention will now have to be sent further away from their home communities and hard-working state employees will lose their jobs when the facility closes. Because of those concerns, we considered every possible option. But given the financial realities we face today in our state, we know closing the Ketchikan facility is necessary.”

Opened in 2002, KRYF has been as a short-term detention facility for youth from Ketchikan, Prince of Wales Island, Wrangell, Petersburg, Metlakatla, Kake and surrounding communities. The maximum capacity of the facility is 10 youth; in recent years the average daily population has been four, and on some days the population has been as low as one youth.

The facility's annual budget is approximately \$1.9 million.

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