

Gov. Pritzker Appoints Robert Vickery as Next Director of Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice

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CHICAGO — Today, Governor JB Pritzker announced his appointment of Robert Vickery, a leader in juvenile justice reform for nearly two decades, as the next director of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) pending senate approval. Vickery currently serves as Interim Director of IDJJ, following the selection of previous Director Heidi Mueller to lead DCFS in February. Before his position as Interim Director, Vickery served as the Deputy Director of Programs from 2017 to 2024.

“IDJJ’s work to care for justice-involved youth across our state continues to prioritize safety, communities, and family wellbeing,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “With many years of impactful experience in juvenile justice, I am confident that Robert Vickery will be an exceptional director for IDJJ as we continue to provide life-changing resources for youth in care.”

“As Deputy Director, Robert Vickery effectively oversaw IDJJ’s operations with compassion,” **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton.** “His ongoing partnership with my office’s Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative will help us push Illinois towards becoming a trauma-informed, healing-centered state at every stage of intervention. Informed and experienced leaders like Robert are critical to public safety.”

Vickery began his career as a juvenile detention officer and probation officer with the 18th Judicial Circuit Court in DuPage County, after which he transitioned to work for the non-profit Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY). In his time at ICOY, he served as Juvenile Justice Project Manager, and later, Program Director, where he directly promoted advocacy and hands-on support for at-risk youth. In 2014, Vickery was appointed as Executive Director of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, where he focused on juvenile justice policy and practice reforms across the state.

“It is a great privilege to lead an IDJJ team that is committed to serving justice-impacted youth and families in Illinois,” **said Robert Vickery.** “When given access to essential supports and therapeutic services, our kids are capable of lasting change that positively impacts them, their families, and ultimately increases the safety of communities across Illinois.”

“In recent years, the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice has been a national leader with respect to innovative and transformative efforts in the youth justice field,” **said Michael Umpierre, Director of the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University.** “Rob Vickery is an outstanding choice to carry on and deepen the agency's work. Rob is an experienced and respected leader who is deeply dedicated to achieving positive outcomes for youth, families, and communities in Illinois.”

As Deputy Director of Programs at IDJJ, Vickery was instrumental in the department's 21st Century Transformation Model, a plan for transforming Illinois' juvenile justice system over the course of four years. In partnership with the Justice, Equity, and Opportunity Initiative (JEO) promoted by Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, the transformation model aims to increase community safety and improve youth outcomes by reducing the harm of incarceration. The Model invests in community wraparound services and intervention services for justice-involved youth, as well as increasing financial support for victim services in communities that are disproportionately impacted by violence. Under Vickery's guidance, substantial agency-wide advancements were made including upgrades to the youth intake process, increased collaboration with innovative community partners, and strengthened engagement with families and former IDJJ youth to improve the juvenile justice system.