

DIVISION OF YOUTH REHABILITATIVE SERVICES
COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
March 12th, 2018

Minutes

In Attendance:

John Stevenson, Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Renee Ciconte, Deputy Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Tanya Banks, Superintendent, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Leann Summa, Quality Assurance Manager, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Antony Gifoli, Program Manager, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Elizabeth Cole, Program Manager, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Frank Kennedy, Newark Athletic Club
Keith Zirkle, Family Services Program Manager, Division of Family Services
Eric McLaurin, Assistant Superintendent, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Michelle Darling, Chief of Community Services, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Judy McCormick, Delaware Council on Gambling Problems
Judge Barbara Crowell, Family Court
Kathleen Covelli-Reyes, CSD
Patricia Lyons, Youth Overcoming Obstacles
Elizabeth Hoffman, DYRS Director's Office

Welcome

Meeting began with general opening remarks at 9:02am.

Introduction of John Stevenson, Director – John Stevenson

Director John Stevenson introduced himself and shared his background in youth rehabilitation. He encouraged the group to give suggestions and feedback. Attendees introduced themselves as well.

Facility Updates – Renee Ciconte

There is currently a vacancy in New Castle County Detention Center for a Superintendent. Mr. Raheem Perkins is covering NCCDC in the interim while Mr. Eric McLaurin, Assistant Superintendent for the Residential Cottages, covers the Cottages. Recent facility numbers have been sustainable and quite low. We've been doing well with diversion on the front end and getting good recommendations from the courts.

Currently we are preparing for PbS. Next month is data collection month. Facilities are also working on submissions for the Barbara Allen-Hagen award. This is a National award for excellence in facilities. Last year Grace Cottage and Ferris School won awards and YRS is hopeful to win more awards in 2018.

Ferris School – Tanya Banks

Ferris has recently brought on a new Program Manager, Ashley Morris, and new Substance Abuse Administrator, Megan Burrows.

Ferris School also has begun their 2nd year of lacrosse. Currently there are 10 games lined up for this season. The facility is only in its 2nd year participating in lacrosse, so they are still learning the sport. The group was encouraged to come out, support our youth, and cheer on our athletes. Recently a youth that was a resident last year notified us that he is currently enrolled in Rowan University and actively plays lacrosse there. He asked for DYRS staff to come out and watch him play.

Residential Cottages - Eric McLaurin

Cottages has hired two new Program Managers, Ms. Elizabeth Cole, and Ms. Nikesha Sanders. In addition, Mr. McLaurin is a new Assistant Superintendent. The Cottages are almost fully staffed. In addition, the Cottages are preparing for the April PbS data collection. The new Program Managers have some new and innovative ideas for the Cottages to enhance family engagement, enhance their style of case management, and improve the way they are engaging our youth.

NCCDC - Renee Ciconte

NCCDC has started transporting all youth to court for bail hearings. Previously they were done in our facilities by video. The initiative started March 6th and was led by the Public Defender's office. YRS is finding that we don't lose that quality and interaction with the youth when they are in the courtroom with their families, their attorney, and with the judge. We are currently monitoring the process to determine if it is more impactful for our youth and if we are getting different decisions.

The group discussed the use of Grace Cottage for runaway girls but there are concerns regarding the mixing of adjudicated and non-adjudicated youth. Grace is a resource that we need to figure out how to properly utilize.

RFK Contract Update – Leann Summa

At the last meeting there was a discussion about bringing in the RKF National Resource Center to do a review of our probation system. That process has started. This will be about a 10 month process and the first site visit will be in mid-April. A multi-disciplinary steering committee was assembled to lead the project. The deliverables at the end will be recommendations for us and making sure that our policies and procedures, training, and method of supervision for the probation officers are in line with the best practices for Juvenile Justice. They will be doing focus groups, mapping our processes, and reviewing our documentations. We hope to receive good recommendations toward allowing us to strengthen what we are doing and to guide us in making some changes where we need to.

Community Services – Michelle Darling

On 04/20/18, there will be a statewide Community Services training day for all of DYRS Community staff. There are 85 staff and generally training has been regionally done. This gives the whole group the opportunity to come together and discuss the same topics. Some areas we are hoping to cover are ethics, services, JDAI, and philosophies.

DYRS Job Fair – Renee Ciconte

Job fair was held on 02/07/18 with the goal of hiring 26 positions, including Youth Rehabilitation Counselors and Treatment Specialists. We were able to fill about half of the positions. 66 interviews were scheduled to be held at the career fair and another 40 people attended to apply on site. We provided facility tours, snacks, informative videos, and other information. We anticipate doing a Career Fair again this year.

Turnover was discussed and new emphasis is being placed on retention. Traditionally, these are high turnover positions. Going forward, YRS will be working with HR to review and address retention rates for our facilities. A question was asked regarding the hiring of rehabilitated adults. As long as the applicant meets the DSCYF hiring standards, YRS does bring on rehabilitated adults. The Delaware Code was changed to remove this type of information from the application to avoid discrimination on the front end. Now criminal history and background checks are done on the back end. These positions are the backbone of our system and make the biggest impact on our youth. The focus will be on training staff well and retention.

JFC – Renee Ciconte

Recently we attended our Joint Finance Committee hearing where we asked for 29 positions which the Governor suggested in his recommended budget, including 27 front line and 2 supervisors for the facilities. Though our numbers are low, our programming is very staff intensive. It is what works for youth. We have never adjusted our staffing to compliment the changes to our model over the years, so we are hoping for the additional positions. Governor Carney has taken an interest in our Division as a priority and supports our youth by attending football and lacrosse games. He continues to be committed to helping our division get the services we need.

Community Advisory Board Future – John Stevenson

Director Stevenson discussed participation in the Community Advisory Board. The size of the council have decreased and he asked for ideas on why there is such a decrease in participation. Some members feel as they do not make a contribution to the council. Members are asking to see a role for themselves as a participant. The group feels the purpose of the council needs to be examined to determine how community advice will play a role and to allow for YRS to access the untapped, willing potential within the board. It was suggested that there be more Community agencies involved in the council as transition into the community seems to be the weakest area. The group feels that there is more we can do for our youth to assist in transition and break the pattern. Major contractors should be attending to share their experiences and allow the community to assist in breaking down barriers. It was also suggested that community

and youth education be addressed as well, as it seems that this may be a transition barrier to our youth, with emphasis on life skills, such as financial literacy and basic job skills.

Meeting adjourned at 10:36am.

Next meeting: June 11th, 2018
 9 – 11am
 Multi-Purpose Facility
 1825 Faulkland Road
 Wilmington, DE 19805