

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

September 14, 2020

9:00am-11:00am

Minutes

In Attendance:

John Stevenson, Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Renee Ciconte, Deputy Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Carrie Hyla, Social Services Senior Administrator, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Michelle Darling, Community Chief, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Eric McLaurin, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Keith Zirkle, Division of Family Services
Jerrica Boyer, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Tricia Lyons, Youth Overcoming Obstacles
Matia Bryan, Delaware Council on Gambling Problems
Kathleen Covelli-Reyes, Christina School District
Raheem Perkins, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Tanya Banks, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Nikeshia Sanders, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Jane Lyons, Youth Overcoming Obstacles
Angela Porter, Division of Management Support Services
Tim Brandau, Community Member
Judy McCormick, Delaware Council on Gambling Problems

Meeting began with general opening remarks at 9:05AM.

Welcome

Kathy Covelli-Reyes welcomed the group.

COVID-19 – John Stevenson

Director Stevenson welcomed the group and opened discussions with a COVID-19 update. He provided information about the staff that have continued to work at the facilities every day and praised them for a great job. He also explained that the majority of the Community Services and the Director's Office is still working remotely. He talked about the several, positive COVID cases that Ferris had and explained that on one occasion, due to the number of staff out on quarantine, Ferris transferred some of the youth to New Castle County Detention Center and to Stevenson House. This ensured the safe operations of Ferris due to the staffing reduction. The remainder of the staff continued to follow the necessary protocols. The Division purchased two foggers to clean and sanitize the areas and have used them several times.

Currently, no youth in any of the YRS operated facilities have tested positive. The Division is moving to universal testing for youth. Both parent and youth must consent for the test to be

administered. Director Stevenson also updated everyone on the COVID-19 Unit at Stevenson House Detention Center. Stevenson House was chosen because it has the most space and the best entrance so that only permitted staff will be allowed on the unit. There are 12 staff volunteers and 12 on standby and we are ready to open the unit if necessary. Voluntary testing for staff should also start this week. The Division is using the same testing that is being used for school districts and other state employees.

Tim Brandau asked how probation was working during the pandemic. Director Stevenson explained that, although the probation officers are permitted to do face to face meetings, they are doing mostly Facetime meetings. What they have found is that their contacts have gone up because it's easier for the clients. Because there is no drive time, they can schedule the meetings back to back. We have not run into any problems with kids not having the necessary technology to be able to attend the meetings virtually. Chief Darling also added that there has been a substantial increase with successful contacts. Again, she attributes this to it being easier for the families with no drive time for them and no need to get babysitters. Kathy Covelli-Reyes asked if FaceTime meetings would continue in the future and Chief Darling explained that this will be explored more at the end of the crisis.

The group also discussed the census in the facilities and the numbers are relatively low. This is attributed to the pandemic and the fact that when this first started, everyone stayed inside and out of the community. Kathy Covelli-Reyes asked if there was a correlation between not being in school and stated that the kids can't do their schoolwork on their phones, that they would need a tablet. This question segued into our next topic, GVI.

Group Violence Intervention (GVI) – Renee Ciconte and Michelle Darling

Deputy Director Ciconte welcomed the group and opened discussion about the Group Violence Intervention Program. This program started about 18 months ago and was initially aimed at adults. The group uses probation to get alleged members of group violence (gang) to a meeting (which is called a "call-in") and then the GVI Director and his team lets the group know that the violence will not be tolerated and then offers services depending on what they need, i.e. housing, bill pay, jobs, etc. This program has seen success in other areas of the country with the hope that it helps to decrease gang violence.

It has now turned toward juveniles, who are being identified responsible for the violence in the city currently. We identify kids with us and assign them to an SJO Officer, SJO will continue to offer adjunct services, (AWOL, Task Force, Intel, GPS, etc.) to community services. A lot of the identified GVI youth are active with YRS, but we are taking a look at how we can be more supportive to the project for the youth we do have on supervision. Chief Darling also added that this is a comprehensive approach to violence in the city with a social service aspect. It has been effective in other areas of the country and is another element of involving the community in an effort to reduce violence. The social service piece is voluntary, parents have to consent, but they talk to the families about what their needs are. GVI is working with 6 families now and are hoping to increase that in the future. Kathy Covelli-Reyes commented about how important it is to help to meet the basic needs of these families through the social service piece. Deputy

Director Ciconte also explained that they are waiting for the data from other states and all agreed that the hope is that the data will support more GVI. Chief Darling stated that in a recent meeting, they also discussed GVI and the expansion beyond that for other services.

GPS Expansion – Michelle Darling

Chief Darling discussed GPS expansion and the plan to support increased public safety. Typically, monitoring was being done Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:30pm. Two years ago they added monitoring from 4:30pm to 12:00am Monday through Friday, but there was still no monitoring from Midnight to 8:00am or on the weekends. Starting after Labor Day of this year, GPS monitoring is now being done by probation staff volunteers almost 24 hours a day 7 days a week. GVI kids with GPS are being checked hourly. This is done in real time, there is no delay. The afterhours staff assigned will contact the family for any alerts and will send an email to the assigned probation officer. There is a spreadsheet to keep track of all of the information. If this is fruitful, we will look into creating a full time position instead of having the volunteers.

Dual Status Technical Assistance – Jerrica Boyer

In October 2019, Family Court was awarded a grant for technical assistance to youth to work with dual status youth (youth that are involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare system). The arrest is used as the qualifying factor. This has been proven in other parts of the country. RFK National Resource Center officially kicked off this initiative with us in February with a variety of system stakeholders. The meetings have been great, but there is still a lot to do. Through the grant, a new multi-disciplinary team process will be developed and staff trained on the process. Kathy Covelli-Reyes asked if it was for only kids active with DFS - The answer is yes – the target population is youth active with DFS who accrue a criminal offense. The team is starting with a smaller group to see how it works with the resources we have available. The group also discussed the need to have services for youth as early in their life as possible and is hopeful that this will put some needed services in place. Once they are a teenager, it's very difficult and we have all learned how deeply trauma affects them. Chief Darling added that within 10 days, there is a multidisciplinary meeting that will discuss the gap in services and try to identify what services are needed so they can start planning now for the future. It's difficult to find the resources within the state and we end up having to send them out of state for specialized care.

New Video, Video Games and Gambling – Judy McCormick

Judy McCormick wanted to let everyone know about a video that they are in the process of putting together. Since there will be no in person presentations for another year in residential facilities due to COVID, this is a good alternative. The new video discusses two things, Gambling and Video Games. There is a link between the two that most aren't aware of. They can both be addictive and some video games involve some aspect of gambling. During COVID, kids have been spending long periods of time playing video games unsupervised, as parents work from

home. Parents aren't aware, but a loot box, which is popular in video games, is a form of gambling. Kids are being targeted and don't realize they are gambling.

The new video should roll out in the middle of October and will be shown in 3 segments. There are also materials that can be presented to teachers that go along with it.

PbS Kids Got Talent Award Winners – Ferris – Tanya Banks

Each year PbS does a talent competition. A group of youth from Ferris won this year, they wrote a song about PREA and performed the song via a music video. Ferris School has a music program which guided the youth through their song development. This is the 2nd year in a row that Ferris has won. Last year, a group of youth and staff traveled to the awards ceremony in Boston, but this year due to COVID, the youth watched the award presentation virtually. Director Stevenson praised Ms. Banks and the good she has done for the kids at Ferris. He stated that one of the kids even won a \$1000 scholarship! Ferris is making sure that they are advocating for the kids and advocating for the kids to go to college. The Department is appreciative of the work that they do.

The group then got to see a part of Ferris's winning video.

Additions

Deputy Director Ciconte shared that family visits in the residential facilities started again safely on July 1st and that they just started to allow some partners to come back in in small groups.

Director Stevenson thanked everyone for their patience and continued support for Youth Rehabilitative Services.

Kathy Covelli-Reyes ended the meeting and thanked everyone for the great information.

Next Meeting: December 14, 2020, 9:00AM-11:00AM

Administration Building, Conference Room #199

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