

COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

December 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
Jane Lyons, Youth Overcoming Obstacles
Angela Porter, Division of Management Support Services
Tim Brandau, Community Member
Judy McCormick, Delaware Council on Gambling Problems
Rebecca Richmond, Psychologist Supervisor, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services

Recorder: Peggy Cipparone, Administrative Specialist, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services

Meeting began with general opening remarks at 9:10 AM.

Welcome

Director Stevenson greeted everyone, started the introductions and welcomed the group.

COVID-19 – John Stevenson

Director Stevenson welcomed the group and opened discussions with a COVID-19 update. There have been several COVID positive staff and youth at the facilities. The first positive COVID case, with any of the youth, was a few weeks ago. YRS continues to follow the CDC guidelines the Division of Public Health's recommendations and are screening staff prior to entering our secure care facilities. There are also temperature screening systems in place at each facility. All of the COVID positive youth are housed on the Isolation Unit at Stevenson House Detention Center. The staff working that unit in full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). These staff members volunteered to work the COVID Unit, which was discussed and agreed to by the union. The youth have displayed mild symptoms or are asymptomatic and are recovering quickly. Dr. Brandau asked how we were able to get volunteers to work the COVID Unit. Director Stevenson explained that they were offered 12 hours shifts, from 7:00 am-7:00 pm or 7:00pm to 7:00am, and they work straight 7 straight days and

then are given 7 days off. The earning of overtime pay and 7 straight days off was a huge incentive. The unit required 12 staff members to operate and the division received 24 volunteers from all of the facilities. A question was raised if, the youth that are staying in the unit, are doing any school work. Management explained that although the teachers are not allowed on the COVID Unit, they are providing packets with school work. Any appointments for those youth, whether it be a doctor, parent or court, are being done virtually.

Placement Authorization Committee Changes (PAC)– John Stevenson

Director Stevenson explained that he took a team with him to look at the PAC process in Maryland. The PAC Committee makes recommendations to the courts about what program a youth should be placed in based on the youth's risk and needs. The clinical team (which now reports to YRS instead of the Division of Prevention Behavioral Health) have join the PAC committee along with a representative from the education unit. Parents and youth are now invited to join that process, which makes the PAC Meetings a little longer, it is important to have the parents and the youth's input. The assigned probation officer is available to help the youth and the family prepare for these meetings.

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

Chief Darling started by explaining a little bit about GVI. The focus of GVI is gangs. Some of the youth are being monitored by GPS monitoring. YRS has increased this monitoring for these youth and they are now monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by YRS staff. These staff members will make calls to parents if they are alerted by the youth's GPS. The youth has to opt in for services provided by GVI. There are many services available, however, if the youth is non-complaint the GVI team may take enforcement action.

GVI is a partnership with the police department, Health and Social Services, coupled with YRS for the needs of the youth and family. If the youth wants to get out of the gang lifestyle, GVI can attempt to assist. They have been able to assist with housing, employment, food, etc. Chief Darling told of one example where there was a family of 11 living in a small apartment and they were able to get them a home, with a yard and enough bedrooms for everyone for the first time ever. They were also able to get them an employment opportunity outside of the city. Kathy Covelli-Reyes stated that having safe and affordable housing changes lives and is happy to see such a great collaboration. When a family gets a little relief with basic needs, they can focus more on the kids and how to help them.

The GVI Program is now in Wilmington with the hope of expanding state-wide in the future. There are 12 youth being supervised now with case reviews weekly. They look for the youth that are causing the most violence in the community. There are multiple agencies involved in an effort to help financially.

Deputy Director Ciconte opened discussions about the Serious Juvenile Offenders Officers (SJO) are now doing case management. Ms. Ciconte stated that SJO have been working with Wilmington Police Department on the law enforcement side with the youth in the city causing the highest rates of violence. These youth may receive face-to-face curfew checks and GPS monitoring. They also go

out with the GVI team to introduce themselves to the parents and youth. They attend weekly meetings with Wilmington Police Department. This is a collaborative effort and the goal is to reduce shootings and homicides. There have been some key arrests in the last few weeks. In New Haven, Connecticut, this program reduced the homicide rate by 30%, it just takes time. The GVI folks are having a positive impact. With law enforcement intel, they identify the youth. These youth are transferred to the SJO unit because of their history with gangs and guns. Not all of the youth are with YRS and we can only address youth under our supervision.

Compassionate Champion Award – Rebecca Richmond

Dr. Richmond opened the discussion by stating that she is excited that we were recognized for the Trauma Informed Care work that we do in YRS. This includes training for staff and reinforce principals which helps decrease the use physical restraints in our facilities. Part of the recognition is for screening all youth for trauma. We know from studies, that trauma can manifest itself later in life and impact families for generations. In the 1990's, the courts were not as interested in what trauma happened to the kids. For our youth, we connect them with services in the community and continue to strive to give the best services. Kathy Covelli-Reyes stated the importance of training in trauma and shared some of her experiences with families affected by trauma that can span several generations. She also stated that training in trauma can be difficult, it requires one to think differently, but is hopeful for change.

Facility Census Updates – Renee Ciconte

Deputy Director Ciconte started the discussion on the facility census and stated that the census has remained low. Nationally, juvenile arrests are down, and other states are closing facilities. The numbers are up a little in New Castle County Detention Center. This may be caused by an uptick in Superior Court youth staying with us longer because of the seriousness of the crime. The group also discussed that there have not been many girls in secure care for the majority of COVID.

Dr. Brandau expressed his concern about an incident with several youth, which included a 13-year-old with a gun, and shots fired by the police. The 13-year-old was released on unsecured bond and only one youth was charged. Director Stevenson stated that they were surprised as well.

Deputy Director Ciconte talked about what was contributing to the increase in numbers. She explained that prior to COVID, they were having Monday morning meetings to discuss what shooting incidents happened, involving youth, over the weekend. Then, in the beginning of COVID, people were scared to be out in the community. After the George Floyd incident, people became less afraid of the virus. Part of the reason for the uptick is because of gang violence, we know them and are prepared when they come in. Ms. Covelli-Reyes asked if part of the uptick was because most youth are not going into a school. The group then discussed that some youth, because they're not attending school, are walking the streets and possibly getting into trouble. There have been some youth that stated they have not logged into virtual school since March. This segued into the topic of youth that don't have what they need to be successful at school, which includes Chromebooks. Dr. Brandau talked about a program that can help get kids a Chromebook and shared that there is an application on their website that once filled out, could help them get one. Deputy Director Ciconte explained that we have also experienced backlogs with ordering equipment. Court

cases are also backed up, there are youth out in the community that haven't been to court since January.

Additions

Deputy Director Ciconte explained that there are no contracted providers allowed into the facilities at this time. The youth are doing all of their visits and appointments virtually. We have ordered technology equipment for the facilities to use.

Kathy Covelli-Reyes ended the meeting and wished everyone Happy Holidays.

Next Meeting: March 8, 2021, 9:00AM-11:00AM
Administration Building, Conference Room #199
1825 Faulkland Rd.
Wilmington, DE 19805