



COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
September 13, 2021

Minutes

In Attendance:

Renee Ciconte, Deputy Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Joe Bryant, DYRS
John Plummer, DYRS
Danielle Stevenson, DYRS
Natasha Smith, DYRS
Nadisha Downs
Aileen Fink, Director, Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health
Eric McLaurin, DYRS
Kathleen Covelli-Reyes, CSD
Raheem Perkins, DYRS
John Schmidt – Delaware Council on Gambling Problems
Tim Brandau, Community Member

Meeting began with general opening remarks at 10:01am.

Welcome

Deputy Director Renee Ciconte welcomed the group. All attendees were introduced.

Chief of Community Services Introduction

Ms. Ciconte introduced Chief of Community Services, Joe Bryant. The group was informed that Michelle Darling resigned from DYRS to join the RFK Foundation in June of this year. Joe joins us from the Governor's Office as the new Chief of Community Services.

COVID Update

Ms. Ciconte reported that the COVID Isolation Unit currently has three youth residing on it. DYRS has fared well during the pandemic and that unit was closed from the end of March until August. Recently three youth became positive, however there is no sign of spread in DYRS facilities. DYRS only has a few staff out due to COVID which was attributed to the community and did not initiate in the building.

Return to work for DSCYF staff began on 09/07 and some staff are approved to telework. Staff are expected to perform the same whether in the office or teleworking. Those staff that cannot fulfill their duties out of the office have not been approved to telework.



The Governor has issued a mandate for state employees to be vaccinated or tested weekly. DYRS was asked about their vaccination rates. The group was informed that DYRS is not permitted to ask staff about their vaccination status. Vaccination and testing certification is being handled by DHR, where staff submit their certifications. Group members shared that they feel DYRS has a responsibility to keep youth safe and that any staff that do not vaccinate should be terminated.

House Bill 26 and House Bill 165 Implementation

The House Bills that eliminate the DOC YCOP program have passed and as of January 2022 DYRS must be ready to house these youth. Currently there are no youth in YCOP. ODS is strategically making moves to ensure no youth are admitted to YCOP during this transition. YRS is currently planning for these youth.

Action for Delaware's Youth has pushed a bill to support funding for cognitive behavioral and vocational training for youth coming out of the Residential Cottages. This will include a one time \$500,000 funding. DYRS has drafted an RFP for services, which goes out tomorrow. DYRS has reached out to current stakeholders to inform them of the RFP so they have time to draft something. This funding is only active until next fiscal year.

Youth Advocate Program Expansion

At the start of the new fiscal year, DYRS took a look at YAP and what can be done better for our youth. Previously YAP connected with youth in care 6 weeks prior to discharge. DYRS has now asked YAP to begin working with youth upon intake. Youth are now assigned a YAP worker when they enter Ferris or the Cottages and also attend the youths treatment team meetings. The goal is for the YAP worker to develop a relationship with the youth prior to discharge to ensure a more successful re-entry.

DYRS has increased the budget for YAP to make this possible. YAP workers are expected to not only work with youth, but their families also, which includes making home visits.

Community Supervision of High-Risk Youth

The Governor has created the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) program that works with law enforcement, DHSS, and others to assist in decreasing violence and keeping youth out of gangs. DYRS assists with the law enforcement side of the program. Youth involved in the GVI program are assigned to SJO, who now handle high-risk case management. Youth are assessed to determine if they need to be assigned to SJO. Youth that are supervised by SJO can be moved back to a regular probation officer if they are doing well in the community.

Recently GPS has been expanded to 24/7 monitoring. DYRS is in the planning phase of creating a dedicated GPS unit to handle and manage the new workload. The goal is house this unit out of the Barratt Building in Dover.



Upcoming Career Fair

The next DYRS Career Fair is scheduled for 09/29/21. DYRS will be focusing on the YCS, TS, and FS classifications. We are hopeful for a successful career fair due to the union negotiations that awarded YCS staff a salary increase.

YRC Classification Change

Recently the union contracts were negotiated. In addition to a salary increase, the classification name had changed from Youth Rehabilitation Counselor to Youth Care Specialist. DYRS feels this title more accurately fits the description of the job. This is still a career ladder position. Salaries are structured by years of employment, which we hope will increase retention.

Additional Items

John Schmidt recently presented his program at NCCDC and Stevenson House. It is reported to have been a huge success. Ms. Ciconte asked Mr. Schmidt if he would be interested in presenting at Ferris and the Residential Cottages. Mr. Schmidt obliged. Ms. Ciconte will reach out to the facilities to have them connect.

Next Meeting: January 24, 2022 @ 9:00am
DSCYF Admin Campus, 1825 Faulkland Rd. Conference Room #199