



**COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**  
**September 12, 2022**

**Minutes**

**In Attendance:**

Renee Ciconte, Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services  
Cassandra Davis, Deputy Director, Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services  
Joe Bryant, DYRS, Chief of Community Services  
Danielle Stevenson, DYRS  
Aileen Fink, Director, Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health  
John Schmidt, Delaware Council on Gambling Problems  
Maya Andrews, Parent Information Resource Center  
Espie Hart, DYRS  
Tanya Banks, DYRS  
Eric McLaurin, DYRS  
Greg Coumatos, Director of Food Bank of Delaware  
Natasha Smith, DYRS  
Raheem Perkins, DYRS  
Kathy Covelli-Reyes

**Welcome/Introductions**

Ms. Covelli-Reyes welcomed the group. Meeting began with general opening remarks at 9:05am.

**Updates on Recruitment and Retention Initiatives**

Director Ciconte acknowledged the nationwide staffing shortages and shared DYRS's struggles recruiting and retaining staff. DYRS held another hiring event since the last CAB meeting, with 50 candidates interviewed, 40 of which received a job offer; though many of these candidates did not complete onboarding for various reasons.

To help combat the recruitment and retention challenges, DYRS and the department have implemented the following initiatives:

- \$200 Weekend Incentive – Staff in select classifications are compensated an additional \$200 per weekend shift worked from Friday C-shift through Sunday C-shift. The goal of this incentive was to decrease call outs and incentivize staff for reporting for their regularly scheduled weekend shifts and to decrease freezes.
- 12 Hour Casual/Seasonal Weekend Positions – DYRS entered into an agreement with Council 81 for four 12 hour weekend only shifts. These positions are compensated at \$40/hour with no benefits and include Saturday and Sunday shifts every week from



8am-8pm. The positions are currently posted and close on 09/22/22. DYRS still has not determined where these positions will be stationed. Staff in these roles will not be eligible for the weekend incentive or the attendance incentive.

- Attendance Incentive – Previously the department implemented an attendance incentive for staff in select classifications. This incentive pays \$750 quarterly if staff meet attendance criteria. This incentive has now been made a department policy.

### **Update on OC Implementation**

Director Ciconte updated the group on the use of OC spray in DYRS facilities. Use of the spray began 6 weeks ago and it has been used 4 times since. Each facility has OC spray trainers. These trainers are responsible for fully training facility supervisors and above in its use and for training other line staff in awareness. In addition, trainers maintain inventory and tracking of the spray. The purpose of the spray is to provide supervisors and management with another tool to assist in behavior management and to reduce youth and staff injuries during restraints. Each use of the OC spray prompts a thorough review by administration.

### **Budget Initiatives**

Last year, DYRS requested 4 positions to be able to provide 24/7 response to GPS monitoring. This request was approved. Currently DYRS does not respond to GPS alerts 24/7. With these new positions, DYRS intends to create another SJO unit with a supervisor and 3 officers to accomplish this goal. Implementation is expected to occur by spring 2024. These staff will have to attend the DOC training academy in January. With this addition, DYRS Probation Officers will no longer need to monitor GPS's for youth on their case loads. DYRS is already working on creating FY24 budget initiatives as well.

### **Delaware Council on Gambling Problems – Updates**

John Schmidt addressed the group to discuss his experiences in DYRS facilities. Recently he met with Ferris staff to talk about what the Delaware Council on Gambling Problems does. John shared that he presents at schools throughout the state and talks to kids about risk. This presentation focuses a lot on digital technology while he shares his own personal experiences. Recently he presented to the 22 kids at Ferris and feedback was positive. He noted a big difference in the behavior of Ferris and detention center youth. John also shared he will be doing a basketball/wisdom learning experience with NCCDC kids. Additionally he attended a Manhood meeting at SHDC and was impressed with the event. Director Ciconte would like to see the Delaware Council for Gambling Problems present to the Cottages youth. Mr. Schmidt was asked to partner with Mr. Perkins to work out the details.

### **Additional Items**

#### Food Bank of Delaware

Greg Coumatos from the Food Bank of Delaware spoke briefly. He shared the Food Bank's new initiative to expand services. The Food Bank currently has a fully functioning farm in



Milford, a warehouse training program, culinary school, and a cafeteria. Additionally they have partnered with Door Dash and Amazon for delivery services and will soon be launching an app for food drop off for those that want to help but can't volunteer their time. All group members were invited to tour their northern facility.

### MIR3

Director Ciconte reminded the group about the MIR3 notification system. This system sends out notifications to community members who have signed up when there is an emergency on campus, to include escapes and walk-offs. Currently there are over 100 community members signed up for this service.

In addition, DYRS made a security enhancement to the Residential Cottages to include a full fence around the basketball court. While this enhancement will not stop a youth from walking off campus, the hope is to deter youth from walking off or to slow them so staff have the opportunity to intervene. Additionally, the Cottages have changed their outdoor recreation routine to include staff stationed in specified areas and having a chase car on hand and ready to respond when needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47am.

**Next Meeting:                    December 12, 2022 2022 @ 9:00am**  
**DSCYF Admin Campus, 1825 Faulkland Rd. Conference Room #199**