COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

June 08, 2026, 2026
9:30am to 11:30pm
DSCYF Admin Conference Room #199
1825 Faulkland Rd., Wilmington, DE 19805

Attendees:
Renee Ciconte, Director, DYRS
Rebecca Richmond, Ph.D., Deputy Director, DYRS
Carrie Hyla, Social Services Senior Administrator, DYRS
Ashley Bruncsak, Community Service Program Administrator, DYRS
John Schmidt, Community Member, DCGP
Tracy Whitehouse, DYRS Quality Assurance Manager, DYRS
Tim Brandau, Community Member
Kathleen Covelli-Reyes, Community Member
Tanya Banks, Superintendent, DYRS
Bethany Dudash, Psychologist, DPBHS
Mitch Holland, Community Member
Sadia Shirland, Office Assistant, DYRS
Lisa DiStefano, Community Member
Hepzebah Erwin, Superintendent, DYRS
Ian Smith, Superintendent, DYRS
Mercedes Watson, Community Member

Welcome

The meeting began at 9:31 am with remarks from Director Ciconte welcoming the group and the discussion of topics on the agenda were skipped to the first agenda item.

New Castle County Detention Center Superintendent Introduction:

Director Ciconte introduced Hepzebah Erwin as the new Superintendent for New Castle County Detention Center. She gave a brief history of Ms. Erwin and advised she came to us from Maricopa County, Arizona. She advised Ms. Erwin comes with 25 years of experience in juvenile justice. Director Ciconte then had the room provide introductions for Ms. Erwin.

Facility Update:

Graduations: Director Ciconte advised we had a great number of kids graduate from high school this year. She advised we have 2 graduating from Stevenson House, 2 from New Castle County Detention Center and 3 from Ferris.

Hiring Event/Staffing: Director Ciconte advised staffing continues to be a struggle. She advised we struggle across the board with staffing and retention. She advised we are having a hard time filling our Treatment Specialist positions.

Division Legislation Impacts:

Director Ciconte advised a couple of things we're working on in the in the division legislation. So again, we're back in legislative session. We have a little break in the Joint Finance Committee hearings. We're back in session again. Our two bills that are part of this session so far are down there this week in that house, in the House and then Senate.

- **SJO PROFERA**

  SJO is our serious juvenile offender units. We have one unit in the division that is very short staffed. I have 13 positions and three officers. They are the lowest paid officers in the state. So, they have to try to get their wage increase. We're on time for negotiations right now. So hopefully theirs will get an increase. But I have two supervisors that are in this unit: one that's the intelligence of law enforcement side and one that's supposed to be over electronic monitoring 24/7 apprehension unit. But he has not been able to do that at all because I can't staff this unit, they are not unionized, and their salaries are low. Step by the merit system and we've asked appealing for increases with no movement. Basically, PROFERA is the name of the bill, police and firefighters, police officers, I mean members. It's in that something act basically it allows anyone in the law enforcement agency to be protected by. That bill was passed a few years ago. So, our two supervisors in the actual union are also not union protected because they forgot about that in the bill. So, in the initial bill, we are calling for a cleanup bill to get them added. Senate Griffin filed this bill for us because they need to be included in that before they can get unionized wages. Hopefully I can get these salaries right so I can staff this unit to be able to assist.

- **Private Detention Bill**

  We are waiting on the Governor to sign this bill. Representative Matt Gorman sponsored a bill to ban private detention facilities in Delaware. One facility is in Newark right now. We closed the Milford one in November, based on our populations. So, we asked for a carve out for the one facility which we thought we would be good with, and people are not happy with this either. So, we will continue to run detention as we know it now. There just won't be that opportunity. So, to me you either go to detention, or you go home for the two opportunities. There are 10 beds, there's eight total youth, two girls, six boys. Eventually this will be closing

AFSCME Contract Negotiations:

Director Ciconte advised negotiations were completed and an agreement reached and actively waiting on a signed agreement.

Update on Campus Projects:

Director Ciconte advised Grace was discussed and move in is expected in September. Cleve White building is being renovated and move in is expected in September. Staff from Concord Plaza, which is our Fiscal unit, will be moving to Cleve. This will save DSCYF money as we will not be paying rent on an outside building. She advised YRS got new sirens as the current sirens were original.

Update on Juvenile Citation Expansion:

Ashley Bruncsak advised the JCC is operating with a new juvenile and civil juvenile coordinator, Emily Rice. She has been outstanding since coming on board. Took the lead in all law enforcement training. Ashley advised a law was passed last year requiring all law enforcement agencies in the state to receive training and they must be in compliance by February 2027. Last year there were 620 referrals made to the unit and there is 116 active today.

Open Discussion