

# Monmouth County Youth Services Commission

Tuesday, August 1, 2023

## Minutes

*Agricultural Building, Conference Room #2*

**4:00 PM**

### Attendance:

**YSC Members:** Trude Arnette, Thomas Fichter, Amy Fischer, Laurie Gerhardt, Jennifer Hoffer, Geoffrey S. Perselay, Dr. Lester W. Richens, Lynn Seaward, Kaitlyn Silagyi, Desiree Whyte.

### Staff:

Ellen Cohen  
Dustin Knoblauch

### Guests:

Ashley Lobbato, Caitlin Mejia, Albert Weedon

## **I. CALL TO ORDER: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING'S ACT**

Amy Fischer on behalf of Hon. Ellen Torregrossa- O'Connor called the meeting to order and read the Open Public Meeting's Act Statement. A welcome and introductions were given. A motion was made, seconded, and carried (Perselay:Arnette) to approve the Youth Services Commission minutes from the June 6, 2023 meeting.

## **II. YSC CO-CHAIR REPORT**

Since our last full Youth Services Commission meeting in June, there have been several items related to youth and the department of Human Services that have been on the Board of County Commissioners meeting agenda. Geoffrey S. Perselay reported that this time of year is the start of the state budget and virtually everything has been approved. They include approximately 2.5 million in state and federal grants for various organizations.

He briefly highlighted some of the following items:

- Renewal of a competitive contract with the Rugby School to provide work readiness and work experience activities for in school youth administered by the Division of Workforce Development for the period of June 18, 2023, through June 30, 2024.
- FY 2024 Alliance to Prevent Alcoholism and Drug Abuse grant in the amount of \$282,216 for the period July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.
- FY 2023 Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Youth Leadership Grant in the amount of \$70,562.
- New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Division of Child Protection and Permanency State Fiscal Year 2024 HSAC grant in Monmouth County to be

used to support planning activities by Monmouth ACTS Advisory Council in the amount of \$64,362.

- Authorization of competitive contracting to provide Community-Based Coordination and Navigation for the Monmouth ACTS Navigation System administered by the Monmouth County Department of Human Services.
- A New Jersey Department of Children & Families, Division of Children's System of Care Application for a fiscal year 2024 Children's Interagency Coordinating Council was authorized in the amount of \$44,556 to support the function of the CIACC for the period July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024.
- Renewal of various social service contracts, administered by the Monmouth County Division of Planning and Contracting, for the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024, at a total cost not to exceed \$1,119,950. There are 14 different contracts included (Family and Children's Service, Inc.; Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey, Inc.; United Way of Monmouth and Ocean Counties; the Foodbank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties (Fulfill); Big Brothers Big Sisters; Child Care Resources; Lunch Break; Interfaith Neighbors; Community Affairs and Resource Center; Jewish Family & Children's Services; The Arc of Monmouth; LADACIN Network, Inc.; Family Resource Associates, Inc; and Center for Vocational Rehabilitation).
- COVID-19 Community Recovery Grant funds to Tigger Stavola Foundation-Middle School Partner Program to strengthen Drug Education to Middle School Children within Monmouth County in the amount of \$200,000.

In addition, Geoff indicated that there were several grants applied for by the Prosecutor's Office & Sheriff's Office:

- Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program in Monmouth County to continue to support the Multi-Jurisdictional County Gang, Gun and Narcotics Task Forces (\$97,846).
- Victim of Crimes Act Grant in an amount up to \$515,345 if awarded, will be used to support services and assistance to witnesses and crime victims in Monmouth County.
- 2023 US Department of Justice/Office of Justice Programs- Bulletproof Vest Partnership Program (\$48,560.75).
- 2023 Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over Statewide Labor Day Crackdown Grant (\$7,000).

### **III. YSC ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE**

Ellen Cohen requested for the YSC minutes- the ratification of the Youth Services Commission electronic vote taken for the 2024 JDAI Innovations funding application that was submitted to the Juvenile Justice Commission. Copy of the electronic vote was distributed to the membership. The electronic vote taken approved the recommendation of the 2024 JDAI IF application that includes the STEADY program and the Family Navigator-Partners with Families with community and youth engagement to the Board of County Commissioners for their authorization and submission to the Juvenile Justice

Commission. There were 14 yes votes and 4 votes to abstain. Ellen reported that the Board of County Commissioners authorized the 2024 JDAI IF application for submission to the JJC at their July 27<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Ellen stated that the administrative code, state statute governing Youth Services Commission - N.J.A.C. 13:90 was readopted with amendments. The document was previously distributed to the membership and was included in the New Jersey Register-June 5, 2023 -Rule Adoptions for Law and Public Safety- Juvenile Justice Commission. Some of the items included will require some changes to our membership and committee structure. An update to our existing bylaws will be needed. Of note the membership of the Youth Services Commission shall consist of no fewer than 23 voting members (21 required, plus at least two optional) and may have up to 35 members (21 voting, plus 14 optional who are appointed by the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners.

Ellen indicated that three positions on the Youth Services Commission who were previously optional are now required- they include:

- A parent of an at-risk or justice-involved youth or a representative from an organization working on behalf of parents of an at-risk or justice-involved youth.
- A youth with exposure to or experience in the juvenile justice system who has not yet reached the age of 26 years.
- A representative from a nonprofit community organization located in or working on behalf of one of the most densely populated areas within the county.

Please notify Ellen if you have any recommendations of strong candidates to fill those required positions.

Ellen informed the membership that the YSC Committee Structure outlined in the regulations now include the following:

YSC Planning Committee-The development of a comprehensive youth services plan and updates prepared in accordance with the provisions at N.J.A.C. 13:90-3.11. In developing the plan, this committee shall review data as required by the Commission's comprehensive planning guidelines and any additional relevant data, including, for example, data gathered through focus groups and surveys, on an ongoing basis to identify the needs of youth within the county and to identify strategies to address those needs.

YSC Review of Proposals Committee-The review of proposals from providers seeking to provide sanctions and services and/or delinquency prevention programs, ensuring mechanisms are in place to review and score proposals to determine whether proposals meet the requirements of the RFP, which shall include a review of prior year monitoring findings; reviewing RFPs prior to release to ensure they reflect the services and programs approved by the youth services commissions; and ensuring no conflicts of interest exist among individuals participating in the review of proposals tied to any particular RFP.

YSC Monitoring Team Committee- Monitoring and evaluation of sanctions and services for juveniles adjudicated or charged as delinquent, and delinquency prevention programs, which includes: reviewing the results of each monitoring conducted by the monitoring

team convened in accordance with any guidance issued by the Commission; discussing the acceptability of corrective action plans submitted by the youth services commission administrator, monitoring team, and funded providers; ensuring a process is in place to evaluate the programs and services; and providing timely recommendations to the youth services commission for consideration as part of the decision to renew a contract.

Education, Training and Community Awareness Committee-Education, training, and community awareness, including educating the community on the youth services commission's roles and responsibilities and developing and implementing a community engagement plan to enlist the community's participation in identifying the needs of youth and strategies to address those needs. The community engagement plan should identify specific outreach and engagement strategies that will be employed (for example, town hall meetings, listening sessions, webinars, social media campaigns) and the expected outcomes of those strategies.

Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities Committee-Racial and ethnic disparity in the juvenile justice system, with a focus on making recommendations regarding how to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the county's juvenile justice system through data-driven practices, community-based programming, and coordination of system reform initiatives. *A joint subcommittee with the Local Council on Juvenile Justice System Improvement can be considered. This makes sense since there are crossover members from the YSC also serving on the Race, Equity & Community Subcommittee.*

Executive Committee-Executive and administrative matters, which shall be addressed through an executive committee, consisting of the chairs of all standing committees, the chair, and co-chair of the youth services commission, and which shall set the agenda for youth services commission meetings, review committee progress and corresponding reports to be presented at the youth services commission meetings, and determine the need for and call any special meetings of the youth services commission.

Ellen indicated an update to our existing Bylaws will be needed to include any changes required.

#### **IV. Education Update**

Dr. Lester W. Richens stated Happy August 1<sup>st</sup> and that the new school year is on its way. School year programs that were extended and summer schools are now winding down. He indicated that they are gearing up for next year and hope that the school climate and student socialization is better this coming year. After the pandemic, he noted it was a challenge for students to adjust to the environment of being back. An uptick in fights was experienced.

Threat assessment teams will be activated as of September 1<sup>st</sup>. They may be district-wide teams or school level teams. If a threat is made, the team is assembled to see if it is a true threat. Police may check the home for weapons, an interview with a psychologist may be conducted if truly dangerous. He noted it will be an interesting dynamic in the school

environment. They will need to determine at what age, do you do the threat assessment and how do you handle the parents' reaction. The NJ Department of Education issued guidance on the establishment of behavioral threat assessment and management teams. The threat assessment team established by a board of education or a board of trustees, must be multidisciplinary in membership and, to the extent possible, must include the following individuals: a school principal or other senior school administrator; a school psychologist, school counselor, school social worker, or other school employee with expertise in student counseling; a safe-school resource officer or school employee who serves as a school liaison to law enforcement; the school safety specialist; and a teaching staff member. Dr. Richens indicated that there has been an uptick in Harassment, Intimidation & Bullying (HIB) incidents. He noted that a referral to the school can be made directly by the parent. On a more positive note, Dr. Richens indicated that they recently recognized and celebrated the Teacher of the year from Monmouth Regional and the Superintendent of the year from Red Bank. He also indicated that grants are out to help with tutoring that districts can apply for. Dr. Richens expressed gratitude for the help received from Prosecutor Raymond Santiago who is working extremely well with the schools and recently helped to set up a gang awareness training for new Principals that will take place August 7th.

#### **V. Prosecutor's Office**

Thomas Fichter reported that the Prosecutor's Office held two sessions of the cyberbullying awareness pilot program for youth and their parent(s). This program is a resource for stationhouse adjustments from law enforcement. He indicated that 10 youth showed for the sessions with their parent(s). The short survey given to participants indicated an overwhelming positive response to the program. The program is not running in August but will start up again in the fall. Tom stated that he has plans to get the Juvenile Officers Association (JOA) together in September. The Strategies for Youth - Juvenile Justice Jeopardy program has been rescheduled for September 18<sup>th</sup> and September 19<sup>th</sup> and will be held at the Boys & Girls Club in Asbury Park. Juvenile Justice Jeopardy is an educational game that helps kids stay safe and out of the juvenile justice system by learning about how to navigate interactions with peers and the police. The workshop is free and those who attend have access to the interactive educational game. Strategies for Youth also conducted training for police. Monmouth County police officers attended a four-day training program in June that included tools and strategies to interact with young people more effectively. By offering insights into adolescent brain development and behaviors, the officers learned skills and strategies to de-escalate interactions and avoid the use of force. Officers were also trained on racial and ethnic disparities and reducing arrests of youth demonstrating mental health issues. Tom indicated that this is a train the trainer model. In regards, to the threat assessment teams, Tom stated that Sgt. Sean Murphy is the liaison from the Prosecutor's office for training. This evening is the national night out against crime and there are numerous municipalities throughout Monmouth County participating. A list of those towns has been compiled.

#### **VI. Court & Probation Updates**

Caitlin Mejia stated that there have been some exciting things happening with probation. A recent life skills class held included 30 participants. A job fair that highlighted different careers and professions was held. Caitlin Mejia shared information on the Gun Reduction Task Force Initiative. Intensive supervision will be provided to adults and juveniles with gun/firearm related offenses. The program works when the probation division reviews eligible cases for presentation to the Gun Violence Reduction Initiative Advisory Board. The board evaluates client information such as age, marital status, number of children, charges, arrests, education level, employment status, drug use history, gang affiliation and the reason for the referral, and makes recommendations for services, treatment providers and/or intervention. The board recommends counseling, mentoring programs, job training, education and other community-based services based on the individual's needs. This collaboration aims to provide needed services to participants to reduce recidivism and future criminal involvement. Participants are assigned to a gun initiative probation officer, who supervises them and ensures compliance with recommended services. The officer also incorporates the board's recommendations into individual client case plans. The probation officer maintains a caseload of no more than 35 clients. Caitlin shared that Natalie Martin, a Senior Probation Officer, has been assigned to help with this specialized caseload.

Amy Fischer reported on the new hires recently employed by the Vicinage within the Family Division that will help build back their FJ team. These include two new Probation Officers and a Judiciary Clerk 3. Amy stated that well-seasoned, Jennifer Montano is team leader with Kathleen Wardlow. For statistics they are hiring an Administrative Specialist 3, who will be helpful with screening, diversion and addressing backlog in a centralized way. Amy reported that Danielle Worthy, JJC Research and Reform Specialist was providing new team members with a JDAI 101 training.

## **VII. Juvenile Justice Commission**

Jennifer Hoffer reported that Lisa Macaluso has returned to a position at the Juvenile Justice Commission and is serving as the Deputy Executive Director, Policy, Research and Planning. Under her area on the JJC table of organization is JDAI and System Reform; Research and Evaluation; and the Office of Local Programs and Services. The Office of Local Programs and Services includes the Youth Services Commissions Grants Management Unit; the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) /Grants Unit; the Court Liaison Unit and the Youth Justice Facility Monitoring Unit.

The JJC Family Partnership initiative was awarded to the SPAN Parent Advocacy Network to provide services in the Northern and Southern regions. SPAN services include education and training for families. They specifically focus on multiple languages and will be able to provide training for families with multiple languages. SPAN Parent Advocacy Network will also staff and lead a family centered Resource Council which includes families of the JJC youth.

Other initiatives reported at a recent JJDP meeting included that the JJC is working to ensure any resident who is eligible to obtain their drivers licenses within 6 months of release from JJC can receive 6 hours of behind the wheel training. This will enable them to obtain their drivers licenses once they leave the JJC. The JJC funded Defy Ventures to implement an entrepreneurship program at the NJ Training School, Albert Elias, Costello Prep, and Warren Residential programs. Every cycle includes a certificate and an event. Defy Ventures is a national organization working with incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals and have supported startup of small businesses. Their entrepreneurship program includes reentry services. Jennifer Hoffer stated that the JJC is seeking to expand their supportive work program to give youth more opportunities. They are seeking employers and searching for non-traditional jobs to expose JJC youth to different experiences. Jennifer shared that family dinners have been held at the cottages at the NJ Training School that have been well received, are a nice incentive and are having a positive impact. They help to keep the youth connected with their family. Jennifer reported that some JJC youth are also taking college classes or working on obtaining their GED or high school diploma.

## **VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **A. YSC Planning Committee**

Trude Arnette reported that the YSC Planning Committee met on July 13, 2023. The Juvenile Justice Commission is extremely delayed this year in providing us with the framework for our next three-year Comprehensive Youth Services Plan and the 2024 grant application for State Community Partnership Grant and Family Court Services funds. As best as we can without the specific guidelines and framework, the YSC Planning Committee continues to review and discuss the most current data and reports available related to youth. Most recently Ellen compiled and shared information from the 2023 Kids Count report specific to Monmouth County and information related to the 2022 NJ Office of the Attorney General-Office of Justice Data report specific to Monmouth County offense categories.

The YSC Planning Committee is interested in learning from YSC Members what your perspectives are relative to the most current service needs. There have been various changes in the field and some new initiatives that have taken place. Historically we have place focus in the following areas:

- Primary Delinquency Prevention Services (Upper Elementary School Age Children and Youth Transitioning to Middle School).
- Secondary Delinquency Prevention - Community and School Based Mentoring Services (Pre-Teens Ages 9-12).
- Secondary Delinquency Prevention - After-School and Summer Positive Youth Development (Pre-Teens Ages 9-12).
- Juvenile/Family Crisis Intervention Unit (FCIU).
- Diversion- Station House Adjustment and Family Court Referral Resources.
- Marijuana Diversionary Program Education Enhancement.
- Diversion - Adolescent Early Intervention Services & Parent Child Conflict Resolution Program.

- Disposition - Individualized Services for Youth on Probation.
- Disposition - Specialized Treatment Services for Youth with Problematic Sexual Behavior. and
- Disposition - Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment Services

Trude stated that in lieu of putting folks on the spot at this meeting with a survey, please send us an e-mail to get your feedback. Please advise the YSC Planning Committee (either Ellen or Trude) of any specific needs of youth that you feel are important to address in the categories of prevention, diversion, detention/detention alternatives, disposition, and re-entry. We will look to integrate your feedback into the planning process.

Trude Arnette reported that we received a budget modification request from Martin Krupnick, Psy.D., IEP Youth Services, Inc. related to the Probation Offender Program and the Probation Multi Treatment Program that we wish to present for recommendation and submission to the Juvenile Justice Commission that is a modification to Monmouth County's 2023 application. IEP Youth Services reports that the number of juveniles referred to the Probation Offender Program has been declining, which is an indication that the incidences of sexually inappropriate behaviors by juveniles has been reduced. However, the number of referrals to the Probation Multi Treatment program has increased significantly, as the Juvenile Court, Juvenile Intake, Referee and Juvenile Conference Committee have continued to make referrals. As a result, a request has been made to transfer \$25,000 from the Probation Offender Program grant to the Individualized Services for Youth on Probation (PMT) grant. Both programs are in the same disposition service category and receive 2023 Family Court Services funds. The YSC Planning Committee requests approval from the YSC to submit this modification request to the Juvenile Justice Commission. Information pertaining to how this transfer will impact each program's level of service (respective increase or decrease) was provided by IEP Youth Services and will be included in the modification to the Juvenile Justice Commission. A motion was made, seconded, and carried (Arnette: Richens) and a roll call vote taken. To recommend a modification to Monmouth's 2023 grant application for Family Court Services funds that requests the reallocation of \$25,000 from the Probation Offender Program to the Probation Multi Treatment Program both of which are implemented by IEP Youth Services, Inc. and are in the disposition service category. This revision will then be submitted to the Juvenile Justice Commission for their approval and if approved will be forwarded to Monmouth County's Purchasing Division and Board of County Commissioners for modification to the contracts.

## **B. YSC Monitoring Team**

Dustin Knoblauch stated that the 2023 monitoring of the funded Youth Services Commission programs took place during May and June. A total of 18 programs were monitored. Agencies with more than one program had their monitoring consolidated on



the same date. Overall, the 2023 monitoring was very positive, and the staff employed by the programs are well trained and bring a wealth of experience and skills to their positions. Through interviews conducted, feedback was received from the program staff, youth, and families as well as, references in some cases about the YSC program services funded. The longevity of the mentoring matches with Big Brothers Big Sisters is very positive. The YMCA is innovative in their thinking around the use of interns to deal with staffing issues. Some of the prevention programs expressed challenges in the schools and despite some obstacles are doing extraordinary work. In July, the 2023 monitoring report findings were issued to the agencies. Dustin stated that the Youth Services Commission is very fortunate to have the array of service providers and programs that we do in Monmouth County.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**X. OLD BUSINESS**

**XI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**XII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

***Upcoming YSC Meeting Dates- October 3, 2023-Agricultural (Ag) Building, Conference Room #2; and December 5, 2023-Virtual via Zoom.***