

Monmouth County Youth Services Commission
Tuesday, June 6, 2023
Minutes

Human Services Building, First Floor Conference Room
4:00 PM

Attendance:

YSC Members: Trude Arnette, Wendy DePedro, Thomas Fichter, Amy Fischer, Laurie Gerhardt, Jennifer Hoffer, Ivan Kaplan, Hon. Ellen Torregrossa-O'Connor, Geoffrey S. Perselay, Raymond Santiago, Lynn Seaward, and Sebastian Trapani

Staff:

Ellen Cohen
Dustin Knoblauch

Guests:

Caitlin Mejia

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

Hon. Ellen Torregrossa- O'Connor called the meeting to order, read the open public meetings act and welcomed everyone. She stated it was good to have the meeting in person. Judge O'Connor acknowledged the recent passing of the Honorable Lisa P. Thornton and took time to recognize the tremendous contribution Lisa gave to us. Judge O'Connor indicated that she was an absolute gem, a one-of-a-kind person, who had an infectious spirit, a quality person with charisma. She had an open heart and led with that. In her life she overcome many obstacles but helped to move mountains. Judge O'Conner expressed how blessed and what a privilege it was to work with her. She noted that juvenile justice was and area she held dear and appreciated the work we do.

A motion was made, seconded and carried (Perselay: Arnette) to approve the minutes from the April 4, 2023 Youth Services Commission Meeting.

II. YSC CO-CHAIR REPORT

Geoffrey S. Perselay expressed his condolences on behalf of the county for the passing of the Honorable Lisa P. Thornton and acknowledged the tremendous loss experienced by the Vicinage and her family and friends.

He welcomed our new Director of Child and Youth Services, Dustin Knoblauch who started three weeks ago. He indicated that the Director of Child and Youth Services is a new position in the County, created in response to needs identified through Monmouth

ACTS. The Office of Child and Youth Services will unite our youth related functions under Human Services including CIACC, Youth Services Commission, and JDAI. Dustin will also work with our community partners to revamp the Positive Youth Development Hub and serve as the County co-convener.

Geoffrey Perselay reported that a resolution was adopted amending the contract with the Mental Health Association of Monmouth County for the 2023 JDAI Innovations Funding for the Family Navigator -Partners with Families Program. An additional \$50,000 was added to their program to enhance and expand services to include community and youth engagement. The personnel assigned to the program has increased to include a new Bilingual Support Staff and Strengthening Families Program Coordinator. A significant amount of the additional funds requested are for the implementation of the Strengthening Families Program and Restorative Practice Training, Wrap Around Services for Positive Pro-Social Youth Activities and Linkages for Community Mentoring. Juvenile Justice Commission approval for this modification to Monmouth's grant application was provided.

He indicated that the Monmouth County Division of Behavioral Health contracts were renewed for the period of July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024 at a combined cost not to exceed \$979,373. Included are outpatient mental health services for Eastern Monmouth and outpatient mental health services for Western Monmouth, Suicide Prevention for Adolescents (with the Mental Health Association @ \$70,000) and Child Family Crisis Clinicians (with Monmouth Medical Center @ \$139, 373).

Geoffrey Perselay announced that at the May 25th Commissioners' meeting a resolution was adopted authorizing a MOU between the Monmouth County Division of Workforce Development and the Sheriff's Office for the establishment of a Re-Entry Employment Specialist Program at the Monmouth County Correctional Institution (MCCI). The Reentry Employment Specialist Program services shall be available to all currently incarcerated individuals, recently released individuals and formerly incarcerated individuals from MCCI.

III. YSC ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

Ellen Cohen stated that the New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. Title 13 Law and Public Safety Chapter 90 Juvenile Justice Commission) governing county Youth Services Commissions was up for readoption and includes some changes. The Juvenile Justice Commission indicated that they intended to release the regulations on June 5th. This will require our review and examination on the new requirements and an update to our bylaws to reflect membership and committee structure and any other area where there are changes noted. There was some indication from Safiya that there will be a grace period for this year but an expectation that everything including the bylaws will be required in 2024.

Ellen shared information on the Summer Expansion Grants awarded to the Boys and Girls Club. Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC), in conjunction with the Governor's

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Committee, has awarded 17 grants totaling more than \$369,000 to police departments, schools, and non-profit organizations across the State to expand summer programs for at-risk youth. The grants provide organizations already operating successful summer programs for at-risk youth with up to \$30,000 in additional funding to enhance their programs and/or increase the number of young people they serve. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Monmouth County will receive \$24,520 for camp expansion will focus on increasing enrollment and services in the new Long Branch Unit by 20 additional youth and 3 additional weeks. This summer program will provide opportunities for youth to experience field trips, guest speakers, and special events.

Ellen reported that Kathy Collins indicated that she could not make the YSC Meeting. She has a State Council on Juvenile Justice system Improvement Access to Treatment Subcommittee meeting that was moved from virtual to in-person in North Brunswick. As a Co-Chair, she must go and won't be able to make it back to Freehold in time. The 2022 JDAI Innovations Funds Outcome Reports have been issued to our programs to be completed and submitted back to the JJC before June 30th. Danielle Romano our JJC Research and Reform Specialist assigned to Monmouth County has transferred to another position within State Government. Danielle Worthy who has been with the JJC is temporarily assigned to Monmouth.

Ellen shared that we have been informed that Liza DeJesus will be transitioning to the role of Program Director for the Monmouth County NJ4S Statewide Student Support Services Program here at Preferred Behavioral Health Group. Liza comes to this role with over 17 years of experience in her work at Prevention First. Kate McCarthy will be promoted to the role of Director of Prevention First when she returns from her medical leave. In the meantime, Liza will be straddling both roles with the help of her amazing Prevention First Team.

IV. Education Update

Dr. Richens stated that they are nearing the end of the school year. He shared that Judge Thornton was a Long Branch High School graduate and was inducted into the Long Branch Hall of Fame. He shared that she held meetings with the superintendents and that we will miss her, and she lit up the room when she was present. Dr. Richens stated that the districts have been addressing learning loss due to the pandemic. The infusion of federal dollars has helped to address some of the issues encountered such as the need for more counselors, SEL programming and strategies to address student peer interactions and behavioral issues. Dr. Richens stated that his office has monitored 13 districts and conducted 52 mid-year budget reviews where they discuss issues and approve budgets. He reported that there are 7 new superintendents in Monmouth County this year and specified the districts where they were from. Dr. Lester W. Richens stated that Liza DeJesus is scheduled to speak at the upcoming Superintendents roundtable meeting regarding NJ4S Statewide Student Support Services. He hopes that she can alleviate

some of the push back about it. Dr. Richens stated he is very proud of the districts who are working very hard.

V. Prosecutor's Office

Judge O'Connor expressed her appreciation to the Prosecutor's Office for their discussions and resource development on a program to address cyberbullying; and for being proactive to intervene in a meaningful way, and for thinking outside the box.

Thomas Fichter stated that on Thursday they would be hosting a cyber bullying program from 6:00 Pm to 7:30 PM at the Prosecutor's Office where youth and their parents will attend. He indicated that 8 are signed up to attend with their parent(s) and that he was optimistic that it would go well. Referrals to the Cyberbullying program may come from police departments for stationhouse adjustments, Intake Service Conference (ISC) and Juvenile Conference Committees (JCCs).

There was some discussion whether the cyberbullying presentations could also be offered to the schools. Tom indicated at this point their presentation is for a select target population. He noted that the Sheriff's Department may also do presentations on this topic. Wendy DePedro stated that the new NJ4S Statewide Student Support Services is designed to be a resource for the school and can assist in this area. Building presentations into the school curriculum was discussed. Challenges experienced in getting parents to attend was stated. Prosecutor Raymond Santiago stated unfortunately, only a select few parents come out to the educational programs. Making it a requirement to come to the program and making it a mandatory education event may be helpful. There is a willingness to partner with the schools. Dr. Richens stated they can try but, he was unsure how successful it would be. Sebastian Trapani shared perhaps when students- pickup their chrome books for access to computers- there could be a course or workshop that they need to be attended on social media and cyberbullying.

Thomas Fichter stated that due to an unexpected illness the Juvenile Justice Jeopardy workshop at the Boys and Girls Club of Monmouth County scheduled for June 5th and 6th was cancelled by Strategies for Youth, and likely will need to be rescheduled for some dates in the future to be determined. He indicated that Strategies for Youth is a national nonprofit training and policy organization dedicated to improving police/youth interactions and reducing law enforcement's disproportionate contact with communities of color. Thomas Fichter reported that 12 local Police officers will attend a four-day training program June 13-16th at the Prosecutor's Office. The training includes interactive discussions on adolescent development, mental health issues prevalent among teens and the impacts of trauma on police/youth interactions. Role play and dialogue with community youth and leaders of youth-serving programs will be included. Tom indicated that this is a train the trainer model.

VI. Detention Update

Sebastian Trapani reported on detention utilization and indicated that the shared service -

agreement that Monmouth County has with the Middlesex County Juvenile Detention Facility is for 10 detention and 3 shelter beds. During recent month's Monmouth has exceed our 10-bed capacity and needed to locate another county's juvenile detention facility to place the youth. Arrangements have been made with Ocean County however, a formalized agreement needs to be established. Sebastian highlighted how the number of secure detention beds purchased through a shared services agreement has changed over the years. With fewer juvenile detention centers in the state, there is more competition for those beds that sometimes result in higher costs and rates. Although Middlesex County has a 100-bed capacity, they are currently operating at 65 beds. Space is at a premium with multiple counties utilizing the same facility. Sebastian reported that there has been an average of 9 kids a day at the facility but, at one point it spiked at 16 and today, we have 12 youth in need of secure detention. Ten youth are detained at the Middlesex facility and 2 youth in Ocean County. The placement of the youth at Ocean County was through a verbal agreement. A desire to develop an overflow agreement was expressed. In the past Monmouth had such agreement with Union County but, that detention facility has since closed. Sebastian expressed concern regarding manpower issues for transportation that impacts the Sheriff's Department traveling to different counties. He understands that the County Administrator is talking with Ocean County and would like to be included in the negotiations. There may be a condition to pay for any secure beds upfront to reserve them. Ideas to address the bed shortage ranged from the JJC establishing another detention facility that they run at Jamesburg; shifting our 3 shelter beds at Middlesex to detention when needed; exploring space at other counties facilities. Federal law prohibits mixing adult and youth populations for there needs to be sight and sound separation. Sebastian highlighted potential concerns if we are using more than one detention facility, where youth will be screened when in a mental health crisis for in Middlesex he noted that since our juveniles are not Middlesex County residents they are not given priority for placement. Officers need to wait with the youth.

VII. Court & Probation Updates

Amy Fischer reported that they are at the end of the court year and are working at reducing any back log of cases. She noted that they are rebuilding staff teams for various docket areas. Amy Fischer stated they are hoping to recruit a new Probation Officer and find hiring difficult for the Judiciary. Individuals applying indicate they want more remote work. Amy shared good news that they will be hiring an Administrative Specialist III that will be strictly for data analysis that will be helpful in measuring outcomes.

Caitlin Mejia also indicated that probation was experiencing the same challenges with workforce. People are leaving for the federal system. Caitlin stated they are reviewing their use of the risk tool to make sure it is being utilized with fidelity. She noted that it has totally changed how probation does its work. Juvenile Probation Supervision had four officers. Their caseloads are in the mid 30's. One officer has a specialized caseload which is at 15. Caitlin highlighted some of the creative programming that probation is offering that includes activities such as teaching life skills, a basketball tournament, and career day. She noted that they like to provide incentives to the youth to promote positive behavior.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. YSC Planning Committee

Trude Arnette reported that the YSC Planning Committee met on May 4th and June 1st since our last report to the full Youth Services Commission. She indicated that we have been somewhat on a holding pattern waiting for the release of our 2024-2026 planning guidelines and grant application from the Juvenile Justice Commission. Trude Arnette stated that we have proceeded to continue to review and collect data from various points in the system that we can integrate into our plan once we receive the document. Due to some of the traditional data points being impacted by the pandemic and the potential changes to the state statute governing Youth Services Commission which may impact our grant application, the state is very delayed in releasing the documents. We hope that they will be issued soon. In the interim we are focusing on the monitoring which is another area required to be completed for the plan.

Trude Arnette highlighted the various items discussed at the YSC Planning Committee meetings. At the May 4th YSC meeting we discussed the status of the 2023 JDAI IF Modification for the Mental Health Association of Monmouth County and the Eligibility Criteria for the 2024 JDAI IF Application. Other areas of focus included the following: 2023 YSC Monitoring Team Schedule of Dates; Juvenile Justice Jeopardy-Strategies for Youth- Outreach; the Status of Plan Guidelines, Data Collection and Surveys; updates from the Division of Juvenile Detention Alternatives; Court & Probation; the Alliance to Prevent Alcoholism and Drug Abuse & Opioid Settlement Focus and the Juvenile Justice Commission.

Information from Kids Count; Youth Committed to JJC custody-2021 statewide information; Detention & Length of Stay information and feedback and statistics from the Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program were shared and discussed at the June 1st YSC Planning Committee meeting.

Trude Arnette shared feedback received from Rebecca Butler regarding juveniles being supervised by the Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program (JISP). Many of the juveniles that JISP works with have mental health and substance abuse issues as well as unstable familial relationships. Rebecca indicated that “fortunately, JISP has a lot of services that we provide to the juveniles. Truthfully, the biggest challenge we have is schooling and phone issues. By the time the juveniles reach our program they have been expelled from many of their schools and it is a constant struggle to have the district immediately implement an in-person educational program for the juvenile to attend. Some of the juveniles go weeks and even months with no in-person education. As I said, the other main struggle is having the juvenile have a phone for contact purposes. Many of our juveniles do not have phones or internet services so at times it becomes very challenging for the Officers to get in contact with the juveniles. At this time, we do have several juveniles in the Keansburg/Bayshore area. A lot of them know each other as it is a relatively small area”.

Trude reported that the next YSC Planning Committee is scheduled for July 13, 2023, at 9:00 AM.

B. YSC Monitoring Team

Jennifer Hoffer reported that the 2023 monitoring of the funded Youth Services Commission programs is now underway. Members of the 2023 YSC Monitoring Team include in addition to herself, Trude Arnette, Ellen Cohen, Ann Goldman, Ivan Kaplan, Dustin Knoblauch, Lynn Seaward, Kaitlyn Silagyi, Yolanda Taylor, Elizabeth Williams and Danielle Worthy. Jennifer stated that we are grateful that we have added some new members to our YSC Monitoring Team for 2023. This year we are trying to have most of the monitoring in person and not virtual. Jennifer Hoffer stated that a total of 18 programs will be monitored. Agencies with more than one program will have their monitoring consolidated on the same date. Our schedule includes the following:

May 31st- New Hope Integrated Behavioral Health Care at 10 AM

(Adolescent Residential Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program)
80 Conover Road, Marlboro, NJ 07746

June 5th -Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal and Northern NJ- at 10:30 AM

(Primary Delinquency; Secondary Delinquency (ACEs): Community, School Based and Workplace Mentoring; and Youth Empowerment Program)
305 Bond Street 2nd floor, Asbury Park, NJ 07712 * held virtual

June 9th -Wellspring Center for Prevention at 10:00 AM

(Why Try Leadership Program)
3600 Route 66, Suite 171, Neptune, NJ

June 12th - IEP Youth Services, Inc. at 10:00 AM

(Probation Multi Treatment Program and Probation Offender Program)
83 West Main Street, Freehold, NJ 07728

June 15th -Boys and Girls Club of Monmouth County at 2:00 PM

(Phoenix and SMART Moves) 231 Wilbur Ray Ave. Long Branch

June 20th-Mental Health Association of Monmouth County at 10 AM

(Family Crisis Intervention Unit; Adolescent Early Intervention Services & Parent Child Conflict Resolution Program; Marijuana Diversionary Education Program; and Family Navigator-Partners with Families Program)
106 Apple Street, Suite 110, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

June 22nd -Division of Juvenile Detention Alternatives at 10 AM

(STEADY) Monmouth County Human Services Bldg.
PO Box 3000- Kozloski Rd., Freehold, NJ 07728

June 22nd - Preferred Behavioral Health- Prevention First at 2:00 PM

(Life Skills Training; Keys to Innervations (KIV); and After School Program)

40 Christopher Way, Eatontown, NJ 07724

June 26th- YMCA of Greater Monmouth County at 10 AM
(Community Based Mentoring Program) 613 Hope Road, Eatontown, NJ 07724

IX. NEW BUSINESS

Lynn Seaward shared information on the Monmouth County Stigma-Free Initiative that works to prevent and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness and raises awareness of the disease of mental illness through education. The initiative aims to create cultures of emotional wellness in all of the places where people live, learn, work and play in Monmouth County. Lynn Seaward shared that a Stigma-Free Toolkit for Schools has been developed. Dr. Richens requested copies for distribution at the upcoming Superintendent's Roundtable Meeting.

X. OLD BUSINESS

XI. PUBLIC COMMENT

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned. **The next full Youth Services Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 1, 2023 at 4:00 PM and will take place in the Monmouth County Agricultural Building, conference room, #2**