

Juvenile Justice Reform Act Implementation Commission

Minutes of Meeting
2012-2013 Interim
November 29, 2012

I. CALL TO ORDER

Representative Leger, Chairman of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act Implementation Commission, called the meeting to order in House Committee Room 6 in the State Capitol, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at 10:11 a.m. The secretary called the roll.

II. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Walt Leger, III
Chairman
Senator Sharon Weston Broome
Mr. David Burton, Louisiana District Attorneys Association
Mr. Francis "Frank" Neuner, Jr., State Public Defender Board
Ms. Tracie J. Woods, Southern University and A&M College
Chief Justice Kimball, Louisiana Supreme Court

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Ms. Kristy H. Nichols,
Division of Administration

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kelly C. Fogleman, Commission Attorney
Lori Hutson, Commission Secretary

III. DISCUSSION

Chairman Leger welcomed commission members and encouraged comments from the members as the meeting progressed.

Deputy Secretary Dr. Mary L. Livers, Office of Juvenile Justice, opened the meeting with an update on the Office of Juvenile Justice statistics. She stated that there are currently 2,530 juveniles on probation, 143 youth on parole, and 282 youth in non-secure custody or group homes. Dr. Livers stated that there are 117 youth at the facility in Bridge City, 84 youth at the Jetson Facility, and 147 at the Swanson facility. Dr. Livers noted that by use of the Savry tool or the risk and needs assessment process the number of youth in secure have declined by approximately 20.8% from previous years. She continued that the number of youth in non-secure care has seen a more dramatic decrease of 41% over the last three years. Dr. Livers stated that the decrease with probation services was 23.5% over the last three years. She applauded all the stakeholders throughout the state for this

dramatic success.

Dr. Livers noted that aggressive altercations were also on the decline because the youth were being taught pro-social ways of dealing with issues that arise, instead of anti-social solutions.

Dr. Livers discussed the decrease in staff turnover and described how intense these day-to-day job positions were and the need for consistency and stability. She noted that the recruitment strategies were changed and the new recruits and current staff were encouraged to have a college degree.

Dr. Livers noted that the Department of Education identified Swanson and Bridge City as "top gain" schools in the state, because those schools doubled the top gains that were expected. She stated that students that pursued a GED were at an 80% passage rate, and the youths were encouraged to attend college or vocational training. Dr. Livers stated that Harvard University recognized the Office of Juvenile Justice as a Bright Idea Program for the service coordination efforts.

Mr. Burton and Dr. Livers discussed the job of the case workers and noted that these staff are responsible for security and behavior modification of the juveniles in their care. They discussed the protocols regarding altercations between staff and youth and how these incidents were investigated and enforced.

Director Mark Steward, Founder of Missouri Youth Services Institute, detailed his 42 year history with youth services in Missouri and noted that he was the first group leader of the therapeutic program in 1970 and eventually became the director of the entire program for 17 years. He thanked the commission members for their visits to Missouri to evaluate the program's success and their hard work as advocates for positive change in Louisiana. Director Steward noted the positive progress that he saw during his tour of the state's facilities and the need for caring staff. He encouraged the continued progress through trained staff, the implementation of the therapeutic group settings, continued education improvement, and the reduction of violence.

In response to Chairman Leger's question, Director Steward replied that the ideal number of youths per therapeutic group was 10 to 12. He encouraged the continued progress that the state was making and noted that a trained caring staff and new facilities would enhance the process greatly. Director Steward noted that in Missouri there was an advisory board made up of one half democrats and one half republicans from across the state to oversee and monitor the process.

Director Dane Bolen, Louisiana Juvenile Detention Standards and Licensing, provided the commission members with a history of the standards implementation process which began in 2003 with Act 1225. Director Bolen noted that an extension for the local standards implementation from January 1, 2012, to July 1, 2013, was provided for in the 2012 Regular Session. He described the process as positive and applauded the local and state parties involved with phase one of the process and stated that the July 1, 2013, deadline would be met.

Deputy Director Dana Schumberg, Center for Children's Law and Policy, based in Washington, D.C., described the Center's work in the state by providing technical support in conjunction with the MacArthur and Casey Foundations with improving conditions of confinement. She stated that the Center provides training to local individuals to help access conditions in juvenile detention facilities. Ms. Schumberg detailed for the commission members the help provided to the state in the drafting of standards, by the use of a task force to provide oversight and recommendations of the "best practice" of the standards. Ms. Schumberg described the success of the preliminary licensing visits by DCFS licensing specialists with the area detention administrators. Deputy Director Schumberg noted that the new standards banned the use of restraints and pepper spray and provided an across-the-board mental health screening assessment. She also noted that the staff will have a new range of training requirements including sexual misconduct training. She stressed the need for cooperation by the detention centers with local parish school districts and the Department of Education. Deputy Director Schumberg stated that the implementation of the new standards was a good learning process and collaboration of interested entities.

President Tony Celestine, Louisiana Juvenile Detention Association, stated that the licensing process was in the implementation phase and that training has begun and all 15 local detention facilities have had an initial contact. He noted that the DCFS inspectors began inspections in May of 2012 and have been received favorably. President Celestine stated that the initial visits were productive because all questions and concerns that arose that could be addressed. He discussed future meetings and training sessions to fully implement the new standards.

In response to Mr. Burton's question, Mr. Bolen replied that once the standards were in place the LGDA would ensure consistency, training, and compliance with the standards.

Mr. Burton and President Celestine discussed the need for continued training and inspections for consistency.

Chief Justice Kimball and Mr. Bolen expressed a concern that the process may be delayed by legislation and standards were needed to provide consistency and educational resources to the youths.

Dr. Debra DePrato, Project Director, Louisiana Models of Change, Systems Reform for Juvenile Justice, provided the commission with an update on HCR 120 of 2011 Regular Session. She provided the commission members with a powerpoint presentation, (included in this file as exhibit "A") and she noted the financial contributions from the MacArthur Foundation. The power-point detailed the regional consensus building meeting results where a total of 108 people interested in juvenile justice reform participated in three regional meetings. Areas of discussion and responses provided a consensus to: improve the juvenile justice system, further develop juvenile justice best practices, and the creation of a data and training resource with best practices for the juvenile justice system. Dr. DePrato provided a detailed individual priority survey of the Institute of Public Health and Justice Consensus Building Meetings, (included in this file, as exhibit "B").

Dr. DePrato stated that the Institute of Public Health and Justice will provide a draft report to the commission members by mid-December with the final report submitted by mid-January.

Mr. Burton and Dr. DePrato discussed the Children and Youth Services Planning Boards created by Act 555 that received funding from the MacArthur Foundation, regarding identifying services, coordinating local efforts, and breaking down barriers among the different agencies. She stated that it would be very beneficial to have regional boards throughout the state and stressed the need for state funding.

Ms. Shaena Johnson, Youth Advocate, Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, provided a powerpoint presentation, (included in this file as exhibit "C"). She briefed the commission members on the violent history of juvenile detention facilities in the past. Ms. Johnson noted that many positive changes have been made in the past 10 years, but there were still issues that needed to be addressed to ensure juvenile justice reform in Louisiana. She noted that the Office of Juvenile Justice would have saved \$38 million in 2010-2011 if the youth were placed in a less restrictive environment.

Mr. Joshua Brown, Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana, referred to exhibit "C" and described various altercations and problems at the Bridge City facility.

Ms. Johnson and Mr. Brown referred to exhibit "C" and provided recommendations as follows: full implementation of LaMOD, step all non-violent offenders down to the least restrictive environment, increase efforts to minimize transfers into the adult system, better trained staff, create regional facilities, prioritize community based programs, include parents in the child's rehabilitation process, increase the transparency in the Office of Juvenile Justice's reporting, and work together with all stakeholders to maximize the effectiveness of the current funding to ensure full potential is reached in juvenile justice reform in Louisiana.

Chairman Leger noted that the Office of Juvenile Justice and the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana share the same vision for juvenile justice reform in Louisiana.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to be discussed.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Walt Leger III, Chairman

Date approved: _____