

Committee on Children Meeting: Progress Report on the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) and Pueblo Unit Strategic Action Plan

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, December 3rd, 2015

1:00PM in Hearing Room 2B of the LOB

I. OPENING REMARKS BY CO-CHAIRS (1:00-1:10)

- a. The meeting was convened at 1:06PM.
- b. Rep. Urban indicated that she hopes this follow-up meeting will be the first of many to make sure the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) and Pueblo Unit are headed in the right direction. Sen. Bartolomeo then provided the parameters of the presentation process and time limits for each section of the meeting.

II. DCF PROGRESS REPORT ON CJTS STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN SINCE AUGUST 12, 2015 MEETING (1:10-1:40)

- a. Commissioner Katz provided background information and data on the youth who are committed to DCF as delinquent and those who are ultimately placed at CJTS and the Pueblo Unit. Commissioner Katz went on to discuss the efforts DCF took to evaluate ongoing efforts at CJTS and Pueblo by commissioning Dr. Robert Kinscherff of the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. She provided demographic information regarding those youth admitted to CJTS and its evolution over time based upon those demographics and comparisons that have been made to other states and national models. She noted the report developed by Dr. Kinscherff was crucial in developing this strategic action plan, as well as the report and outreach from the Georgetown Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and the Annie E. Casey foundation.
- b. Bill Rosenbeck provided a brief description of the contents of the executive summary of the strategic action plan. He noted the plan includes all the original action steps, condensed into categories. Sen. Bartolomeo asked if the original document is accessible. Bill Rosenbeck stated that the original document has developed into a continuously updated internal document. Sen. Bartolomeo asked if the committee ever wished to see the expanded document, would it be available to them. Bill Rosenbeck responded that it would. He discussed the efforts to reduce the use of restraint and seclusion in CJTS, highlighting 6 core strategies. These strategies include: organizational changes, data informed practices, workforce development, restraint and seclusion reduction tools, consumer roles in patient settings, and debriefing techniques. Bill Rosenbeck also noted DCF is developing a three-tiered process that includes a licensed clinical social worker, a psychologist, and a psychiatrist for each youth assessment. He then provided information regarding personal safety plans and increased clinician availability. He highlighted the establishment of a quality assurance leadership team that meets on a monthly basis. Bill Rosenbeck noted the annual ACA audit was completed at CJTS and they received a score of 97.7% based on 302[sic] standards and highlighted the reviewers were impressed that CJTS does not have segregation units like most other facilities in the U.S. Sen. Bartolomeo asked how frequently there are Quality Improvement Leadership Training (QILT) team meetings. Susan Smith responded they meet at least once a month. She went on to discuss the opportunities the meetings provide to review items like CONDOIT. These mechanisms will not only ensure compliance but quality behind compliance to measure the success of children exiting CJTS. Sen. Bartolomeo then asked if they could inform the committee where they are with each action item. Bill Rosenbeck highlighted the ban of prone restraints that has been in place for months, but noted eliminating mechanical restraints may be delayed due to procedures surrounding transport. He went on to state all the clinical pieces of the action plan have been implemented and are ongoing. Bill Rosenbeck added that the five additional points regarding seclusion have been implemented. He reiterated that they have extended the hours that clinicians are on hand in the facilities, but that they have always been on call 24/7 for emergencies. He then stated that clinical assessments are being enhanced through a three-tiered assessment process and needs tracking to improve supports. In addition, they are continuing collaboration with Dr. Robert Kinscherff to implement alternative trauma tools and review those currently in use. A significant action item is the recording of suicide attempts, which have seen substantial improvements in recording, response, and evaluation since implementing the SAFE-T assessment and including outside consultants. Bill Rosenbeck went on to discuss the importance of including the voices of the youth. They were engaged in the design of comfort rooms, and they document their use of the room so they can better understand how the room is useful to them and can be useful to others. They've observed youth successfully self-regulating their emotions in order to reduce incidents and subsequently reduce the necessity of seclusion. Bill Rosenbeck noted there is also a yearly suicide audit of the facility by an outside expert, as well as one-on-one supervision with youths, tracking of their class attendance and participation in education programs, and the Ombudsman has been engaged with youth going through the grievance process and other services. He went on to discuss the efforts to improve and regularly require trainings for staff, the necessity of uniforms for staff, and regular data collection. Bill Rosenbeck informed the committee that Dr. Kinscherff has been kept on in an advisory role and is contacted on a regular basis as they implement this strategic action plan. Bill Rosenbeck concluded his remarks by stating that there are challenges they still face, but have made great strides towards adopting many of the items in their strategic action plan.
- c. **COMMITTEE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR DCF (1:40-2:10)**
 - i. Sen. Bartolomeo asked who CJTS is utilizing for trauma training. Jody Hill-Lilly responded that they are partnered with the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. She discussed the components of their consultative process and strategies for staff. At this time at least 60 had been trained under this program. She indicated the staff has actively requested frequent and additional training.
 - ii. Rep. Kokoruda asked if there are audit scores from years prior. Bill Rosenbeck stated they were at 98.8% the year prior and 98.1% three years ago when they were reaccredited. Rep. Kokoruda asked if there are any areas where there was improvement based on this plan that has helped maintain a high score. Bill Rosenbeck responded it is a little early to look at how much of a shift has been made in the work based on the plan. However, he stated that one of the auditors informed him the youth/staff relationship has greatly improved from his prior visits, though many of the standard scores have been

consistent. Rep. Kokoruda asked if outside individuals have been considered to assist in the review process. Bill Rosenbeck responded that they can look into it and they do share their information with other agencies as it is requested. Rep. Kokoruda asked if the administrative staff members cover both CJTS and Pueblo. Bill Rosenbeck stated that they can cover both units.

- iii. Rep. Ziobron asked if the 455 ACA standards are still in place and if CJTS is mandated to follow the PREA standards. Bill Rosenbeck responded that only 308[sic] of the ACA standards apply to CJTS and Pueblo and confirmed they are part of PREA. Rep. Ziobron asked whether CJTS is able to receive federal funds based on making the PREA standards. Bill Rosenbeck noted PREA often applies to multi-person rooms where as CJTS rooms are individualized. He added the facility would appreciate the opportunity to receive federal funding if applicable.
- iv. Sen. Martin asked about the criminal past of the juveniles coming to the facility. Commissioner Joette Katz provided a summary of the behaviors/conduct that may refer them directly from court, as well as the many youth who come to CJTS after failing to adhere to the guidelines of multiple homecare and congregate settings. Additionally, she stated that re-admittance to CJTS often occurs for youth charged with assault, sexual assault, or possession of a weapon. Sen. Martin stated he hopes that the safety of other youth and the staff is not diminished by the phase out of restraints. Sen. Bartolomeo stated she agreed with Sen. Martin's comments and added that many of the charges that are listed when youth are admitted to CJTS have been pled down.
- v. Rep. Kokoruda asked for clarification on Vermont being the only state without a locked facility. She also asked if CT is unique in having individual rooms. Bill Rosenbeck confirmed Vermont sends their youth out of state and went on to explain that larger states with larger populations are likely to have multi-person rooms. Commissioner Katz added that at a conference in Texas, there was a universal theme of having at least one secure facility available in any state, regardless of the population. Without its existence, it places a greater strain on other services in the system and puts untrained staff as well as high-risk children at greater risk. She provided a comparison to the necessity of large, centralized hospitals for emergency situations, and then the smaller centers and outpatient clinics cover all other needs. Without a facility like CJTS, many youth would not have their charges plead down and would be sent to adult prisons instead. Rep. Kokoruda asked how DCF manages the costs when they only have one female in the Pueblo unit. Commissioner Katz responded that they repurposed the Solnit South facility for the Pueblo Unit at a point and time when the populations were much higher and high-risk girls did not have access to the most ideal facilities or programs. She stated that she and Bill Rosenbeck have had a number of conversations about how to repurpose the Pueblo Unit again so there are at least one or two beds for females, but the other rooms may be set aside for older youths. Commissioner Katz added that the one girl at Pueblo right now is actually in the process of being placed into a community program, and so they will be down to zero, which is a good thing.
- vi. Rep. Ziobron asked about the budgetary plans when there are low numbers for the facilities, specifically Pueblo and how staff is repurposed into CJTS. Bill Rosenbeck responded that Pueblo Unit staff is cross-trained to work at CJTS. Pueblo is designed to be fluid so staff are able to transition as needed. Chris Leone added that they have had a fruitful dialogue with their teaching staff and the Connecticut School Counseling Association to shift them across the state to other facilities in the DCF system. Rep. Ziobron asked if DCF's teachers are able to transition into adult correctional facilities. Chris Leone responded that it would fall into another district which would create issues. Rep. Ziobron asked if they are restricted by contract. Chris Leone responded that adult correctional facilities fall under another district and outside of their teacher's contract. In addition, there is special training for GEDs that was updated three years ago and the majority of DCF teachers are certified K-12. Rep. Ziobron then asked how CJTS is dealing with the enhanced scrutiny and changes in policies affecting the ability of staff to do their job effectively without feeling disempowered. Bill Rosenbeck stated that prior to the strategic action plan, staff did not have to contact administrative supervisors until an incident has escalated to a high level. They now can contact a supervisor at a lower escalation level and that has systematically changed the process for staff. He stated the intent of the policy change is not to cause staff to second guess their judgement or have youth force them to call a supervisor. Once that clarification was made, staff felt empowered to make their own decisions without immediate supervisory needs. Bill Rosenbeck stated that despite the action plan being implemented, the real work being done now is working through how staff/youth respond to these changes.
- vii. Sen. Bartolomeo requested the number of restraint and seclusion incidences at CJTS since the implementation of the strategic action plan be sent to the Committee. Sen. Bartolomeo asked if there were comments written down by the auditor in the ACA report on CJTS. Bill Rosenbeck responded that the ACA auditor must record an exit interview, which was held yesterday. There is a copy of the physical interview and audio available on the CJTS website. Sen. Bartolomeo asked if overtime has been reduced as a result of these changes. Bill Rosenbeck responded that it has. Sen. Bartolomeo asked for a quick difference in description between CJTS and the Manson Youth Institution, which holds nearly 600 youths and covers the same age range as CJTS. Commissioner Joette Katz responded that she would defer to Scott Semple, Commissioner of the Department of Correction. Sen. Bartolomeo provided details to the committee based on discussions of the environment at Manson, highlighting contrasting policies and procedures the facility has compared to CJTS. She stated that going forward it would be important for the committee to have further discussions about this facility.
- viii. Rep. Ziobron appreciated the interest in the Manson Youth Institution and asked Sen. Bartolomeo and Rep. Urban to organize a tour of the facility for the committee. Sen. Bartolomeo agreed. She went on to discuss the necessity to expand the scope and scrutiny beyond CJTS to all children engaged in the juvenile justice system after this initial spotlight.

III. OCA PRESENTATION ON ONGOING ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES RELEVANT TO THE ACTION PLAN (2:10-2:25)

- a. Sarah Eagan provided a presentation on their statutory responsibilities regarding oversight, monitoring and policy review. She commended the changes already being made by Bill Rosenbeck and noted the continued challenges that this state and the country face regarding mental health and appropriate treatment of youths that are involved with the juvenile justice

system. She went on to state the regular activities and functions of the OCA. Sarah Eagan briefly discussed the areas of concern identified by OCA in a previous report and addressed the changes DCF has been making. She noted that OCA is continuing to review and monitor the changes and provided additional recommendations for changes that could be made by the legislature or by DCF in addition to the CJTS action plan. She noted the need for consistent and ongoing training for staff, access to programs, discharge reliability, and the community relations children can build upon while admitted to CJTS. Sen. Bartolomeo asked Sara Eagan to define the access to programs mentioned. Sarah Eagan responded that access to programs was used to broadly cover standard education, arts, music, and other areas on a regular basis and if that access is impacted when youth are involved in incidents. Sarah Eagan stated she is looking forward to keeping in contact with staff at CJTS and DCF as they go forward with their strategic action plan. She reiterated the need for training, especially when measuring the progress for youth and engaging in evidence-based practices which includes data collection and data reporting.

b. COMMITTEE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FOR OCA (2:25-2:40)

- i. Rep. Staneski asked if she felt the debriefing incident reports developed by CJTS to review with the youths were appropriate. Sarah Eagan indicated that she has only taken the opportunity to view a small sample of these incident debriefing forms, but stated that she commended the staff for documenting youth responses to understand how to better handle future incidents and understand triggers. She stated in her opinion there's been an improvement, but would need to review more reports before giving a definitive answer. Rep. Staneski asked if the number of significant incident reports has gone down. Sarah Eagan stated she could not respond to the physical data, but stated the change they continue to see is improvement in structure throughout the day for youths that reduces the likelihood of incidents. Sen. Bartolomeo stated DCF will provide this data to the committee and that OCA has access to it through CONDOIT.
- ii. Rep. Kokoruda asked if the Georgetown report has played a role in DCF's strategic action plan. Sarah Eagan stated that DCF could better respond, but that OCA did highlight a number of recommendations from the Georgetown report in their own presentation.
- iii. Sen. Martin asked the last time Sarah Eagan and her offices reviewed videos from CJTS. Sarah Eagan stated it was roughly a month ago, but they are more regularly reviewing the documents because the videos require a request. Sen. Martin asked if the videos she has viewed have been accurate when compared to the reports. She responded that historically that has not always been the case, some of which is subjective. Sen. Martin asked if this area should be given additional review. Sarah Eagan responded that it should be reviewed by special investigation units if there is a trend, but noted there will always be difficulty with documenting an incident contemporaneously. She added that OCA has requested from DCF aggregate documentation regarding the action steps they take in response to internal findings that raised concerns about documentation, mandated reporting requirements, or interventions. Sen. Martin asked if she has received that information from DCF. Sarah Eagan responded that she received the information a week ago.
- iv. Sen. Bartolomeo asked if the discrepancies that OCA historically has noted as an issue have been a problem since the August 12th meeting. Sarah Eagan responded that the last incident she felt was problematic when it came to documentation was reviewed in July and reported on in September, but they have not reviewed a lot of video as of late. Sen. Bartolomeo asked if there is any thought for OCA to their process regarding viewing initial documents vs. delaying to review debriefed documents. Sarah Eagan stated that they would be more lenient on the discrepancies of time or duration. The discrepancies they found more concerning would be the use of prone restraints occurring on video, but not documented or if a youth who is described as assaultive does not appear to be assaultive in the video. Sen. Bartolomeo thanked Sarah Eagan for her answers and indicated she should provide information to the committee if there have been any discrepancies between videos and documentation since August 12th.

IV. CLOSING REMARKS (2:40-3:00)

- a. Sarah Eagan remarked on the positive progress in the use of secure care within the state of Connecticut. She stated that what is important to consider moving forward is to ensure that youths who leave CJTS, Manson Youth Institution, or any such facility are ready to reenter their community with greater chances of success. Efforts need to be made across the board to ensure these at-risk children have every opportunity to build up skills, receive appropriate mental health services, and having a robust information system tracking whether their interventions were effective once they leave the system.
- b. Sen. Bartolomeo indicated that Commissioner Joette Katz and her staff could respond to any final questions prior to closing remarks.
- c. Commissioner Joette Katz indicated that Linda Dixon and Steve Smith would provide a response to items being addressed in the juvenile justice community. Linda Dixon provided a response to the recommendations from the Georgetown Report, starting with the Standardized Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) tool. She stated when they sat down with their consultants it was decided it would not be a priority at this time, but components of SPEP were implemented, notably the service mapping. Linda Dixon provided data regarding the results they found with the mapping, which included evidence-based practices that would allow youth over the age of 17 to be served in their community or in a housing placement near services. They found children who were able to receive these services and complementary housing placements had positive outcomes. Linda Dixon stated she is also working to add cognitive behavioral therapy components to their service array. She went on to discuss substance abuse service recommendations. The Georgetown report also recommended enhancing mentoring, which they have done, providing both paid and volunteer mentors. She added the youth overwhelming found the unpaid mentors more effective. DCF has also worked to make community programs less restrictive, children are no longer picked up and pulled back to CJTS for respite and instead found group homes. Linda Dixon then provided data regarding outcomes for specific programs, noting 72% of their youth in The Multi-Systemic Therapy Transitional Age Youth Program (MST-TAY) met all or most of their treatment goals and 72% were not arrested during their treatment episode. In addition 77% of youth receiving Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) were not rearrested during their treatment episode and

85% of youth receiving MDFT maintained or improved their school attendance. She went on to discuss data tracking for parole contacts, stating last month 265 youth were supervised by juvenile justice social workers. Of this number, 113 were at home and on average had two face-to-face contacts with their social worker per month in accordance with policy.

- d. Bill Rosenbeck provided a response to the sanction times, noting it should not interrupt reintegration time and that is something they take very seriously through their length-of-stay practice model. He stated the balancing act is that some youth will not engage in community services or will act up at the end of their stay. They look to view the youth as an individual and determine whether they are ready to exit. He then noted the non-mandated, three-tiered home pass process, which has been improved recently and has seen positive results. Finally, CJTS staff have also worked with the juvenile justice social workers and other staff from DCF to understand what has occurred when a child is readmitted to CJTS and establish a new plan.
- e. Steve Smith stated that there are permanency specialists at CJTS to study the availability, barriers, and variety of providers to establish permanency services. There are 29 services currently available in their information system that juvenile justice youths have accessed.
- f. Kristina Stevens stated that their efforts for evidence-based practice models and quality assurance include external partners like the Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) and the University of Connecticut (UConn) as well as Advanced Behavioral Health (ABH) and Yale University, who have been engaged to make sure they are approaching and delivering these models properly and tracking their fidelity.
- g. Rep. Staneski asked if there is data that breaks down the remaining percentages of youths that are not successful and how they are treated. Kristina Stevens stated that there has been a substantial increase in the use of these programs and referrals to these programs by DCF. She noted that their data analysis has found that for many of the programs mentioned previously, children who enrolled in the program 6-8 weeks prior to release were substantially more likely to meet their goals than those who started even five weeks before release. Kristina Stevens added that additional data can be broken down and provided for the committee to better understand how these programs measure levels of success and the various goals. Linda Dixon added that they also have access to unique service expenditures that youth utilize while in the juvenile justice system. If those youth do not succeed in these evidence-based programs, DCF can work with a provider to develop an individualized wraparound approach. Rep. Staneski asked whether the youth know about out-of-program sanctions and how they measure the sanctions. Commissioner Katz clarified that the common terminology for what Rep. Staneski is referring to is "graduated responses" because the responses CJTS staff give to youth are not intended to be sanction-based. Bill Rosenbeck responded that they provide direct 1-1 education to youths that have been given graduated responses and noted that there are a variety of activities they are allowed to engage in including involvement in various forms of therapy, visits from the boys club and group therapy sessions. He stated that they make an active effort not to isolate a youth, but also ensure the safety of staff and residents.
- h. Commissioner Katz thanked the staff for their assistance and expertise throughout this process and also the committee for providing them the opportunity to speak on the work they are doing to improve the conditions and policies at CJTS.
- i. Sen. Bartolomeo thanked DCF and OCA for their attendance and expressed her appreciation that the focus has become united towards improving outcomes for children as well as the safety of residents and staff. Sen. Bartolomeo also commended the efforts being made to implement the strategic action plan.

V. NEXT MEETING, ADJOURNMENT (3:00)

- a. Sen. Bartolomeo stated future meetings would likely not occur until after the 2016 legislative session.
- b. The meeting was adjourned at 3:09PM