

Child and Youth Services Committee Meeting

Douglas County, Nebraska

Tuesday, October 4, 2016

The meeting convened at 1:00 P.M. in Room 903 of the Omaha-Douglas Civic Center, 1819 Farnam Street, Omaha, NE 68183. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is located on the wall near the entrance of the room. A notice of the meeting was published in the September 27, 2016, issue of *The Daily Record*. County Commissioners present at the meeting were Chris Rodgers and Mary Ann Borgeson. Others present at the meeting were Patrick Bloomingdale, Catherine Hall, and Pam Murphy, Administration; Brad Alexander, Douglas County Youth Center; Shelly Hug, Juvenile Probation; Shawne Coonfare, Juvenile Assessment Center; Mary Jane Truemper, Public; and Constance Mierendorf, Douglas County Clerk/Comptroller's office. Commissioner Rodgers chairs the Committee.

A video recording of the meeting is available on the Douglas County Website:

<http://commissioners.douglascounty-ne.gov/board-meetings/videos>

Douglas County Youth Center Update

- Commissioner Rodgers asked Brad Alexander, Superintendent, Douglas County Youth Center, about how his staff was doing after a recent event at the Youth Center.
- Mr. Alexander answered that the staff member was shaken up but was doing fine. The staff reviewed video tape of the incident, but much of what occurred was not covered on camera since it was in a staff area off camera.
- Two youths were involved in a planned escape attempt. Staff did an exceptional job. The use of force protocol was followed to the "T." The escape attempt was thwarted.
- Mr. Alexander presented census numbers for the Youth Center (Attachment A). Today there are 72 youth in secure detention; 5 in staff secure; 7 in EPIC; and 24 in the HOME program.
- Through September 2016, the average daily population was 64.56 in secure; 10.44 in staff secure and 28 in HOME.
- Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA): Mr. Alexander explained that this was an act through the Department of Justice. Administration at the Youth Center attended training last week. This was their second training. The Act goes into effect in October 2017 for juvenile facilities. The Youth Center has already begun preparing for compliance.
- The staffing ratios required by PREA are 1:8 when youth are awake and 1:16 when they are sleeping.
- Staff will begin training this month one year in advance of the implementation next fall.
- PREA requires that the Youth Center have an agreement with an agency that has an investigator who specializes in sexual abuse investigations involving youth. The Center

also has to make available a third party phone number for youth to report allegations of sexual abuse. The Center will meet with Project Harmony to establish an agreement that will fulfill both of these PREA requirements.

- Mr. Alexander said he will meet with juvenile court because PREA applies not just to youth at the Center, but to anyone being held 24 hours.
- The County needs to have language in its contracts with other facilities where the County pays for youth to be held (e.g., Boys Town, Clarinda, Geneva) that states that they are going to be PREA compliant.
- Commissioner Borgeson asked if the Youth Center gets proof of their PREA compliance through a certification process.
- Mr. Alexander said yes and the Douglas County Youth Center will be applying for certification in the spring. The Department of Justice will work with the Center if it needs to adjust any procedures in a 90-day correction period.
- Commissioner Borgeson asked how far off the Center was in meeting the staffing ratios PREA requires.
- Mr. Alexander said they were off, but they are working through some of the issues that affect the ratios. Some units are currently closed, operational capacity needs to be considered as well as their classification system and still be under the 75% number.
- Commissioner Borgeson asked what the maximum number of youth is at the Center. Mr. Alexander replied that it is 120 in secure, 24 in staff secure, and 50 in home.
- Mr. Alexander referred to the exact PREA language regarding "contracting with other entities for the confinement of residents" (Attachment B).
- Read Right: the Omaha Public Schools have decided to continue their support of the program. Students are raising grade levels.
- Pledge for Peace: the program is conducted on the first Friday of each month in conjunction with the Adopt a Unit Program. Adopt a Unit is a program where a community sponsor can reward a unit with pizza for achieving certain goals such as earning credits, attending class, or other criteria.
- EPIC Center: youth are attending Blackburn and Boys and Girls Club at 27th and Hamilton twice a week. The program is going well and an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) is being crafted to make this a permanent location. Three participants graduated in May with their class (no one expected this to happen) and one has recently gone back to senior class where he is playing football, participating in ROTC, and earning mostly A's and B's. 7 youth are participating in the program and 2 more are being interviewed for participation.
- Parent-Teacher Conference: Ten families attended the last conference in August and indicated through surveys that they appreciated the opportunity. The next conference will be held on October 12 and 13. The conference is now open for youth who have been at the Center for 30 days: previously, the requirement was 60 days.

- Barnes and Noble Book Drive: the drive will tentatively be held on December 14. On September 28, Commissioner Kraft dropped off 250 books and renewed subscriptions for 5 magazines that will be delivered to the Youth Center.
- Multi-disciplinary Treatment Team Meetings: the team meets weekly to review any youth with an order to release and all youth experiencing a mental health crisis. The team consists of representatives from Douglas County Youth Center Mental Health, Education, Medical, and a Transition Specialist; NFC (Nebraska Families Collaborative) and Probation.
- Commissioner Rodgers asked whether the Youth Center had an official expediter. Mr. Alexander said that there was a representative from the Public Defender's office. Commissioner Rodgers said this was not a full-throated effort and that in planning for the next budget process, this position should be considered.
- Commissioner Borgeson clarified that Commissioner Rodgers was asking for an independent expediter not tied to the Public Defender's office.

Juvenile Assessment Center

- Shawne Coonfare presented the update for the Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC). She reported that JAC is putting emphasis on staff training. Next week the staff will attend computer-based aid training. They have recently participated in compassion fatigue, cultural competency, and coercive control training.
- The Policy Group and the Case Processing Group are cooperating to write up diversion standards.
- Ms. Coonfare discussed the quarterly comparisons of youth served by JAC (Attachment C). From July through September 2016, 263 youth were referred to JAC. Some referrals come from other areas outside of Douglas County. JAC is cooperating with Sarpy County to transfer youth who are cited in Douglas County but live in Sarpy County. The goal is to transfer them to the county where they live.
- All delinquencies and any police contact comes through the County Attorney's office.
- From January to September 2016, 191 youth were placed on Diversion. 180 completed Diversion successfully; 50 received warning letters. 23 were status referrals and 6 were truancy referrals.
- The 6 new truancy referrals have been recorded since the beginning of the school year. The number is lower this year because JAC held open the truanancies from the end of the last school year and is already meeting with potential truants. Previously, the truancy list at the end of the year would be erased during the summer; now it is being held over so staff can interact with students before problems arise.
- JAC just began taking truancy referrals last fall. Three full-time attorneys were handling truancy prior to fall 2015.
- 826 youth were placed on Diversion in 2015.

Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI)

- Shelly Hug presented the JDAI update (Attachment D). JDAI has 2 target populations it looks at: warrants and disproportionate minority contacts (DMC).
- The numbers presented are for 2015 and the first two quarters of 2016 (Attachment D). There has been some slight improvement in DMC numbers from Quarter 1, 2015 to Quarter 2, 2016. While the decline in DMC's is small, it does show progress.
- The Average length of stay for Quarter 2, 2016 is 35.7 days and the average daily population for the same quarter is 74.9.
- Once the new data people join JDAI, they will analyze these numbers to determine whether some changes can be made to improve the numbers.
- Case processing will be getting technical assistance from the Casey Foundation to see what can be done to expedite youth without jeopardizing any of their rights. The group is also working with DMC to begin system mapping of youth movement in Douglas County.
- Alternatives to Detention (ATD) and Case Processing would like to initiate a locator pilot to track youth who have unlawful absence warrants. They would like to extend tracking to 48 hours for some youth to allow a grace period and prevent detention. A warrant could still be issued, but this would be on a case by case basis. Most youth do return and JDAI wants to work with families with youth who are not runaways, who do not leave the jurisdiction, to avoid arrest.
- DMC has been working on training. The first 2 trainings with the Center for Children, Law and Policy were held earlier this year, and DMC plans to hold trainings in the community later in October or November. DMC has completed its 2017 work plan.
- The data group committee continues to focus solely on issues related to DMC.
- Youth Impact! has participated in a statewide Crossover Youth Practice Model meeting with representatives from several counties (Attachment E). Many have come to Douglas County to see how the County does its crossover work.
- Work continues on the 2016 and 2017 work plans.
- Commissioner Rodgers said official notice from the State has been issued for Community Based Aid money. There is a tight timeline for applying for 2017-18.

The meeting adjourned at 1:46 P.M.