

Child and Youth Services Committee Meeting

Douglas County, Nebraska

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

The meeting convened at 1:02 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 March 28, 2017, issue of *The Daily Record*. County Commissioners present at the meeting were Chris Rodgers and Mike Boyle. Others present at the meeting included Patrick Bloomingdale, Diane Carlson, Pam Murphy, and Catherine Hall, Administration; Amber Parker, Operation Youth Success; Shawne Coonfare, Juvenile Assessment Center; Brad Alexander and Mark LeFlore, Douglas County Youth Center; and Constance Mierendorf, Douglas County Clerk/Comptroller's office. Chris 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

- Brad Alexander said the current census at the Douglas County Youth Center is
 - 77 in Secure
 - 13 in Staff Secure
- The total is 90 youth in detention, which is trending slightly up.
- 44 youth are on the Home Program
- The Center is working on compliance for the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). They will hold a full day of training later in the week.
- The Center has applied to the Justice Department to participate in a free PREA mock audit in February 2018 and has been approved for that audit. The mock audit is an opportunity for those being trained to become auditors to gain practical experience in the field. The advantage to the Youth Center is that it will be able to be fully prepared for the formal PREA audit, which should occur in April or May 2018.
- The education program is doing well. Credits for students were up 9% in 2016, even though the population was lower. There were 7 graduations in 2016 and another is scheduled for April 14.

- Mark LeFlore ran the numbers on students who were admitted in 2016 as Special Education students: 184 were admitted in 2016, and of those, 140 had prior admissions—a 76% recidivism rate.
- Mr. LeFlore, who is chair of the DMC (Disproportionate Minority Contact) working group, said that of those youth, 67 returned 3 times or more during the year. Of those 67, 43 (approximately 67%) were African American. 67% is a high number of Special Education students who are also minorities returning to detention.
- Mr. LeFlore said a Special Education student is defined as one who has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). IEPs are conducted with the families, students and school districts. In general, students have IEPs because of learning disabilities, but they can also have one for behavioral accommodations. There are a wide array of reasons for students to have IEPs, but anything that interferes with a student's normal ability to learn would be cause for an IEP.
- The Douglas County Youth Center has specialized classes for these students and one-on-one instruction in many cases. The fact that IEP students have a high rate of recidivism is a target for the Center and DMC to explore.
- Mr. Alexander said the average age of a male at the Center is 15 and the average age of a female is 15 ½. Youth can be held at the Center up to age 19.
- Commissioner Boyle asked if the cause of the IEPs is known to the Center.
- Mr. LeFlore said there were many causes. Some of the youth are on medication and it is difficult to monitor that medication. Others have behavioral issues; some suffer from trauma. The important thing is that they do receive individualized attention and curriculum and, in many cases, one-on-one instruction.
- Mr. Alexander said the Read Right program has helped identify youth with issues like dyslexia.
- Mr. LeFlore said students who return to detention so many times during the year find it difficult to have success in their traditional school settings. The Center is conducting a pilot at the Boys and Girls Club, funded by the Sherwood Foundation, for a day reporting program. Additional funding would allow the program to coincide with the school year. This would be a great benefit to students because often times students are not accepted immediately back into their schools once they have been released from detention.
- Mr. Alexander said that the EPIC program, which is evening reporting, now serves 10 students; 2 are in the day reporting program. The day reporting program is initially a pilot at the Boys and Girls Club at 26th and Hamilton. The Boys and Girls Club is fully committed as a partner with the Youth Center. All of the youth who need extra educational assistance and participate in the program become Boys

and Girls Club members. Blackburn High School brings lunches to the students, and there is no additional cost to the County.

- The Boys and Girls Club is interested in how well the pilot does because they see the potential of extending the program to South Omaha and possibly nationally.
- The evening reporting program is going very well. Youth are asking to come back to the program. This is all on a voluntary basis. The program offers good mental health services and fun activities. It also concentrates on recovering credits and offering classes where credit can be earned.
- The day program pilot gives students who have been suspended from traditional schools the opportunity to continue with their education.
- Commissioner Boyle asked what happens to youth who age-out of foster care.
- Mr. LeFlore said the state runs a program through Health and Human Services that provides housing for youth who have aged-out of foster care.
- Mr. Alexander reported on mental health at the Youth Center. The Center has 2 Licensed Mental Health Professionals (LMHPs) and 1 psychologist during the day. Region 6 has just committed to another evening LMHP. The position has been advertised and an offer has been made to a candidate. This addition is at no cost to the County.
- Mental health professionals are extremely important for youth who are coming to the Center from court or other traumatic experiences. It is important for youth to have a professional to talk to when they come to the Center.
- Parent-teacher conferences have been successful. The last conference was held in February with 18 families attending. This was the largest parent-teacher conference attendance the Youth Center has had.
- The Barnes and Noble book drive that was held mid-December raised \$1,347.29 for the Youth Center.
- The Multi-disciplinary Treatment Team is meeting and has a commitment from the Public Defender's office to have a representative join the team. This will help the Youth Center understand where youth are with court dates and probation.
- Mr. LeFlore said the Team consists of a transition specialist, education liaison, probation officer, and family engagement liaison. The Youth Center would like to add a psychiatrist to the team because some youth need a medication adjustment. It is difficult to meet the needs of some of the youth with just a pediatrician.
- Commissioner Boyle asked if the Center is tracking the impact of the Multi-disciplinary Team.
- Mr. LeFlore said it is difficult to track exactly what the direct impact of the Multi-disciplinary Team's efforts are once youth have been released. Some court dates have been moved up and some charges have been amended. Those elements can

be tracked. It is not possible to truly identify a single cause that determines length of stay. It is possible to begin with a day count, determine how many days have been saved, and then follow the numbers.

- Mr. Alexander said that the Multi-disciplinary Team is especially beneficial for children with behavioral issues. Having members of the team discuss the child's behavior from a variety of perspectives with focus on the child is the right approach.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of the youth at the Center are before Juvenile Court and $\frac{1}{4}$ are before Adult Court.
- Commissioner Boyle asked about reading assessments for youth coming to the Center.
- Mr. LeFlore said students are tested for math and reading skills. Many enter with third or fourth grade reading skills. On a positive note, the Youth Center increased reading by 15% in 2013, 2014 and 2015--more than any other school in the state. The effort to increase reading skills has been the result of cooperation with the library and Barnes and Noble, youth are using Kindles and are spending a good amount of time reading things they have chosen for themselves.
- Commissioner Boyle asked if Metropolitan Community College might take some students with low reading skills and place them in vocational programs.
- Mr. LeFlore said Metro Community College has agreed to take any student from the Youth Center, at no cost, who has completed a high school diploma. Metro is accepting students into the construction program, as is the Youth Built program at Goodwill.
- Mr. Alexander said the Career Center is also helping youth identify a plan for themselves.
- Mr. Alexander said Step Up, a Work Force Investment Act program, has enrolled 20 youth to date. The recruitment period has been extended to April 7.
- The Douglas County Youth Center will make a presentation to the Douglas County Board at its April 25 meeting.

Juvenile Assessment Center

- Shawne Coonfare presented the Annual Data of referrals to the Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) (Attachment). The number of youth referred to the Center with delinquency charges increased from 1209 in 2015 to 1310 in 2016.
- The actual number of youth assessed in 2015 was 1037; in 2016, the number of youth assessed was 1054.

- The number of youth placed on diversion was 825 in 2015; in 2016, it was 779. The diversion for these youth means that they did not go to the justice system.
- JAC has just begun handling truancy referrals in the past year. Truancy referrals were previously handled by 3 County Attorneys. The role of the County Attorneys is to determine whether there was legal sufficiency, i.e., did the school make all reasonable efforts to deal with the truancy?
- The role of the JAC is a social work role as opposed to a prosecutorial role. JAC works with the schools to exhaust all means to keep youth in school. The objective is not to engage students in the justice system but to serve them in the schools. JAC makes recommendations to the County Attorney's office.
- Ms. Coonfare said she has 2 open positions and is ready to start interviews for a data analyst and a front desk person.
- All JAC staff have recently attended Implicit Bias Training and will be attending the Heartland Juvenile Service Association training at the end of the week. The staff has also completed 3 modules of Suicide Intervention Training. There is a rise in the number of youth who are threatening to harm themselves, so the Center is focusing on suicide intervention.
- JAC has a licensed mental health professional on staff. She does not do therapy at the Center, but she is the point person for suicide intervention and developing protocols at the Center.
- Completion of the diversion process takes, on average, 3 months.

Operation Youth Success

- Amber Parker said the Steering Committee will meet on Thursday, April 20. The School Based Arrest Work Group will make a presentation to highlight efforts to reduce school-based arrests with input from police and SROs (School Resource Officers).
- The DMC working group will hold a Community Engagement meeting on Saturday, April 29, from 10 A.M. to noon, at South High School. The group would like to make this a bilingual meeting using a translator and information printed in Spanish.
- Mr. LeFlore said the meeting might be using interpreting headsets.
- Ms. Parker said Operation Youth Success (OYS) is working on an RFP for 2017 Community Based Aid (CBA). Final notification from the state Crime Commission has not been received determining whether the CBA will be cut.

- Commissioner Rodgers said there was a CBA attorney position that had been pushed back and some effort was being made to allocate that money for a DMC coordinator. There is a possibility of a 4% cut to the budget by the state.

Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative

- Commissioner Rodgers said the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative meeting is Thursday, April 6. The state is not accepting Title II from the federal government. The justification for this is that taking the funds would cost too much money to administer. The DMC comes under Title II, so symbolically, the state is saying it does not want to deal with DMC.
- A DMC conference was held in December. The group will begin to collect and codify data from DMC and JDAI. DMC is working on proposing a minority impact statement.

The meeting adjourned at 1:54 P.M.