

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

October 17, 2012

10:00 a.m.

House Room C

MINUTES

Attending:

Delegates Christopher Peace, Mamyé BaCote, Robert Brink, Beverly Sherwood

Senators Harry Blevins and Stephen Martin

Citizen members Charles Slemp and Frank Royal

Not Attending:

Delegates Peter Farrell and Anne Crockett-Stark

Citizen member Gary Close

Note: One Senate seat is vacant.

Staff Attending:

Amy Atkinson, Meg Burruss, Joyce Garner, Leah Hamaker

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Delegate Christopher K. Peace

Delegate Peace called the meeting to order and welcomed the Commission's new legislative and citizen members. He offered commemorative remarks memorializing the life, legislative service, and leadership of Senator Yvonne Miller.

II. Update on Merger of Department of Correctional Education with the Department of Juvenile Justice

Mark Gooch, Director

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Mr. Gooch described the Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ's) current population and services offered to juvenile offenders committed to or under the supervision of the Department. Mr. Gooch updated the Commission regarding the merger of the Department of Correctional Education and DJJ.

Delegate Peace asked whether career and technology classes are taught, to which Mr. Gooch replied that the Department does and is currently utilizing collaborative partnerships to expand opportunities for its population. Delegate Sherwood also expressed interest in the positive impact of partnerships. Mr. Gooch indicated that there is currently a partnership with John Tyler Community College and the Department is investigating other potential partnerships.

Senator Blevins inquired about how difficult it is to find career and technical education (CTE) teachers, especially for specialized, high-demand careers such as bricklaying. Mr. Gooch replied that the Department is looking at the job markets to see which careers would offer youth the most promising opportunities and that job markets, such as cable running (with a Comcast or other service provider partnership), could be feasible.

Delegate Brink asked what about the recidivism rates and whether there was any correlation between the population engaged in CTE and/or receiving their GEDs. According to Mr. Gooch, the Department is currently not tracking that information, however, the Department, is currently testing how programs perform.

Senator Martin asked about the population of DJJ enrolled in education programs. Mr. Gooch indicated that there are about 4,000 youth. Classes are three hours long.

Delegate Brink asked whether teachers are itinerant. Mr. Gooch indicated that teachers typically teach a class two days a week.

Mr. Slemp asked how many special needs students were served. Mr. Gooch asked if this information could be provided to the Commission at a future date.

Senator Blevins asked where students are able to be trained in big metalworking. Mr. Gooch responded not at DJJ facilities, but off-site at locations made available through DJJ partnerships.

Delegate Peace inquired about life skills training and how that is provided. Mr. Gooch indicated that the material is incorporated into regular classwork.

Delegate Peace expressed appreciation to Mr. Gooch and his staff for the presentation.

III. 2012 Legislative Studies

Study of Restoration of Parental Rights

Meg Burruss, Legal Intern

Ms. Burruss outlined the salient issues of the study mandate and the work of the Advisory Group on this 2012 study, including the study findings and draft recommendations. She observed that Virginia has the highest national percentage of children aging out of foster care without permanent placements. Senator Blevins agreed that Virginia needs to do a better job in placing these children in permanent homes.

Delegate Peace opened discussion about what the “next step” of the process would be, given that the three bills being studied by the Commission were referred by the 2012 General Assembly and could potentially be reintroduced.

Study of Definition of Kinship Caregivers

Leah Hamaker, Senior Legislative Policy Analyst

Ms. Hamaker, using a PowerPoint presentation, led Commission members through the evolution of Commission studies related to kinship care through the current 2012 study. Delegate Peace requested clarification about “informal” and “formal” kinship care. Ms. Hamaker answered that informal kinship care was a primary focus in 2012. She outlined the study mandate of this year’s study and the work of the Advisory Group to this point, including the study findings and draft recommendations.

Delegate Peace noted that this study is important in helping avoid unintended consequences caused by good intentions and/or lack of guidance. Senator Blevins noted that “school swapping” presents a significant problem.

Delegate Peace thanked Senator Barker for being active through the study process and for his ongoing leadership in helping develop solutions related to kinship care.

IV. Adjourn

Prior to adjournment at 11:20, Ms. Atkinson briefly outlined the process for public comment at the Commission on Youth meeting on December 3 and referred interested persons to the Commission’s website for further information.

There was no public comment at this meeting.