

# VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

## Study of Juvenile Offender Re-entry COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUBCOMMITTEE

5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
General Assembly Building  
August 4, 2010  
9:30 a.m.

### MINUTES

#### **Members Attending:**

Delegate Brink, Andrea McMahon, Debra Nedervelt, Lawrence Wilder, Jr., Janet Fuller-Holden, Kimberly Pollard, Tracey Jenkins, Patrick Plourde

#### **Participating Electronically:**

Delegate BaCote, Yvonne Trotman, Steven Blunt, Edith White

#### **Staff Attending:**

Amy M. Atkinson, Leah Hamaker, Lindsey Strachan

#### **Members of the Public:**

Edie Patterson, Sarah Stanton, Liane Rozzell, Shanee Harmon, William Painter, Jessica Jones

Amy Atkinson, Commission on Youth Executive Director, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., followed by a review of the meeting agenda and the meeting's objectives. This subcommittee is one of four which has been formed by the Commission to address focus topics identified by the Advisory Group. Each subcommittee is comprised of Advisory Group members and others having special interest and expertise.

The subcommittee identified and discussed the following issues related to mental health and substance abuse:

#### **General Discussion**

##### **Prior to Release**

- Juveniles are in a vacuum/bubble while in detention.
- This is a very important time, and what can be done to make the transition easier.
- The goal is to give juveniles a starting point, so that they know where they are going. The transition plan should be in place within 90 days prior to leaving.
- Detention homes can be utilized to start reconnecting with family and the community. Two weeks prior to release is the best time for intensive family re-connecting. This is also when terminated Medicaid/foster care can be re-implemented.
- §16-294 funding only starts upon release.

##### **Reentry Mapping**

- The Reinvestment Project engages in re-entry mapping/criminal justice mapping which shows the dollars per block of that city spent on corrections. Sometimes, through this mapping, the disparity in funding and providers can be identified.
- There is some Virginia-specific mapping data which could be used to present a local snapshot of available re-entry resources.
- The federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has a mapping system for which the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) provides input.
- Virginia 2-1-1 is an option, in terms of providing a list of available services around the state and being a good baseline, but it depends on localities' inputting the information themselves.

### **For Research/Consideration**

- Mapping of service providers, or asset listings, or even crisis intervention mapping could all be helpful. If there was a way to interface the data of correctional centers with service providers, then you could see where the gaps are on the map.

### **Counseling/Mentoring**

- Mentoring is a huge issue, requiring further development and cooperation from non-profits and faith-based organizations.
- How does one get knowledge of resources to the family and help them navigate through these resources?
- "If you build it, they will come."
- Instead of relying solely on community organizations, the Commonwealth should consider drawing on the cultural supports of young persons.
- Mentoring should not just be for the juvenile, but for families, too.

### **Barrier 1**

#### **Confinement does not aid relationships with family, community, and pro-social peers.**

- There are two keys to successful re-entry: resiliency factors and maintaining connections/communication with loved ones. Communication with family members can increase successful re-entry by as much as 20%. To maintain communication, family members should not have to jump through hoops, but - on the other hand - caretakers often feel sabotaged by family. The goal is to set the juvenile up for success by providing them with effective supports.
- When juveniles are placed in the Richmond area, it is often difficult to maintain relationships with their families because of the distance. The family of a juvenile placed at a Culpepper facility has to contend with a lack of public transit and also limitations on visitation. These challenges are difficult for families and make it difficult to maintain connections.
- Visitation guidelines are not always applied evenly. The clergy may be unable to visit the juvenile. Lack of proper identification may be an issue. (In some instances, people have counterfeited clergy certifications to gain access, so pastors need to be aware and prepared to present proper identification.) Moreover, treatment professionals may feel their work is being sabotaged by family involvement.
- A major barrier is that families just don't have the knowledge and know how to access such information.
- The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is working on videoconferencing for face-to-face contacts, so that pastors can be added to visitation lists and that families are aware of the visitation guidelines. Unfortunately, the guidelines are not always applied consistently, because there are exceptions.
- Older youth might not have access to post-release supervision. There used to be three halfway houses in the state, but now there are only ten, which house about ten juveniles for six months.
- Virginia gets \$1.8 million from the federal government for independent living.

### **For Research/Consideration**

- DJJ should have meetings with the family to ensure that those visiting are positive influences on the juvenile.
- There should be a range of positive supports for youth; a whole network should be in place to include non-official persons. Visitation guidelines may need to be modified to address this. It may be beneficial to include coaches, neighbors, common law spouses, etc.
- If transportation is an issue for the juvenile's family, webcams could be an option.
- A wrap-around approach (i.e., wrapping services around the juvenile) could be used to help with seamless re-entry and re-enrollment.

### **Barrier 3**

#### **There can be a lack of family/community ties for older youth with histories of out-of-home placements. The need for permanency planning applies to all youth, including older ones.**

- Older youth, especially those aged 18-21, need family links too. These youth often have developmental concerns and are expected to be autonomous. Without connections, there is a recipe for failure. This is a special problem for juveniles in foster care, especially regarding their access to independent living programs. Kinship care is important for older youth.
- There is a structural link between re-entry resources and workforce investment. While "soft skills" training is going on, juveniles should be linked to jobs.
- Virginia is establishing councils under the Second Chance Act of 2007. Virginia is developing a plan to address housing, special populations and juveniles. As part of Virginia's grant application through Second Chance Act grant, workforce investment is being developed. A pilot program is currently in the works, but the hope is to eventually roll it out statewide.
- No connections are a recipe for disaster.

### **For Research/Consideration**

- There is a need for workforce satellite centers. Research ways to improve stronger partnerships with Workforce Investment Boards (WIB).
- In Ohio, juveniles and older youth have become involved in their communities by restoring buildings, which helps them develop a sense of team, belonging, and marketable skills.
- Virginia could start a program where participants are released to work in certain community areas.

### **Barriers 4, 5 & 6**

**Youth might be returning to disadvantaged and socially disorganized neighborhoods which increased the risk of recidivism.**

**There is a lack of community partnerships and innovative programs- there have been few attempts to look to informal networks for support. Community partnerships need to be built and maintained.**

**Maintaining community ties and building a re-entry plan for youth while they are confined is difficult due to distances between the actual community and the facility where the youth is confined.**

- Youth are likely to return to disadvantaged and socially disorganized neighborhoods. Accordingly, there is a critical need for coordinated programs in order to reduce the risk of recidivism. (Ex → GRIP program in Richmond)
- Youth who were previously served in foster care have a transition plan developed 90 days prior to leaving care.
- John Jay College of NY has a civic justice core model that creates a partnership in the community for re-entering juveniles to work on projects to build the community. It builds inter-community partnerships and gives youth something positive to do. It can even help provide a foundation from which the juveniles can gain employment.
- Maryland has a model in the Department of Natural Resources where the youth work towards conservation.
- The National Reinvestment Project in Brooklyn identifies “million dollar blocks” and makes investment in these blocks by creating productive services.
- TANF funds may be used for mapping. This involves listing of services and assets in the community.

### **For Research/Consideration**

- Research if mentoring can be included as a condition of release.
- Investigate using Virginia 2-1-1 for mapping services.
- Virginiahousingsearch.com and socialserve.org are two websites that can be reviewed to ascertain how to access housing and community services.

### **Barrier 7**

**There is a lack of options for gradual release to the community.**

- Boys and Girls Clubs will work with boys' homes in order to help troubled youth.
- Overall, there needs to be a better sense of who is out there and able to provide services.
- DJJ begins to assess community services at the beginning of the juvenile's commitment but this can be difficult because the juvenile is no longer in foster care once they are in the custody of DJJ and Medicaid is terminated.
- Budget cuts have had a tremendous impact upon graduated programs and upon crime control funds.
- Confidentiality concerns are a major barrier to offering gradual release programs.

### **For Research/Consideration**

- Reentry mapping could help. Essentially, the more options available, the better.
- 30 to 60 days prior to release implement a gradual release and assess whether a request for proposals (RFP) with private providers to offer step down services to qualifying juveniles.
- Investigate creation of transition living and halfway houses.
- Investigate utilization of \$1.8 million Virginia receives in federal funds to see if they can be accessed for this purpose.

Ms. Atkinson reviewed the Commission's next steps in conducting the study and thanked the subcommittee members for their contribution. The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.