

DELAWARE COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION BOARD OF MANAGERS

TUESDAY APRIL 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2024

5:30 PM

HYBRID: DELAWARE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING ROOM AND VIRTUAL

**Board Members Present:**

Kevin Madden, Chairman/Councilmember

Dr. Monica Taylor, Council Chair

Elaine Schaefer, Council Member

Kelly Diaz

Chekemma Fulmore Townsend

Rev. James Turner

**Call Meeting to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:35PM.

**Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Public Comment (Agenda Items Only):** No public comment.

**Approval of Minutes:** The Meeting Minutes from Tuesday March 19th, 2023, were approved.

**Report:**

- A. Monthly Detained Youth Report, Juvenile Court and Probation Services, Kiersten Keenan- There are currently five (5) youths in detention. There is one (1) male detained at Chester County, and one (1) male detained at Abraxas Morgantown. The remaining three (3) juveniles are direct file cases with one (1) male at George Hill Prison (Delaware County), one (1) male at George Junior Republic (Grove City, PA) and one (1) female at State Correctional Institution (SCI) Muncy.
- B. Superintendent for Juvenile Justice Services, David Irizarry- Mr. Irizarry began by introducing AnneMarie Ambrose, Stoneleigh Fellow and Karlie Keater, Interim Executive Director of the National Assessment Center (NAC), to present further information on the proposed Assessment Center model for Delaware County as outlined in the baseline report submitted to the Board by Children's Center for Law and Policy (CCLP).

Ms. Ambrose began by stating that within CCLP's baseline study report that was previously presented to the Board, the NAC's recommendations highlighted the following areas:

- The five (5) zip codes with the highest need
- Data supporting that most offenses are low level
- Data regarding information on existing service provider partnering opportunities
- Data regarding information on existing community partnership (as well as community members who are interested in participating in the process).

Ms. Ambrose went on to state that the proposal for a continuation of services with the NAC anticipates the NAC partnering with the community in those five areas, examining existing assets, and working with community members to identify additional assets that could serve

as preventative alternatives to detention. This information would then be used to create individualized “Service Hubs” within those communities and would address an array of preventive strategies for youth in the community (mental health, abuse/neglect risk, delinquency risk, etc.).

Ms. Keator provided additional insight into what an assessment center is and how their model and method could be adopted. Ms. Keator began by listing the following goals of an assessment center:

- Prevent delinquency, either initial or further
- Provide comprehensive services to youths and their families, as well as serve as a resource center for the community
- Create a conduit to share information and improve communication among different agencies
- Provide a cost-effective response to juvenile crime
- Reduce the amount of time between arrest and intervention by expediting processing within the system

Ms. Keator additionally stated the assessment centers do not just assess. They successfully aid in diversion and prevention by providing resources and connection. Assessment centers rely on multiple points of contact that occur through the following channels:

- **Before Police Contact**
  - Schools
  - Youth
  - Family
  - Hospitals
  - Community
- **Police Contact: No Citation**
  - Status offenses
  - Family conflict
  - Misdemeanors
  - Community determined criteria
- **Police Contact: Cite and Release**
  - Misdemeanors
  - Youngers Programs
  - Felonies
  - Community determined criteria
- **Police Contact: Arrest and/or Detained**
  - Felonies
  - Community determined criteria

Ms. Keator reiterated that assessment centers are not one-size-fits-all and can fit the specific needs of the jurisdiction it serves. Citing the Family Resource Center (FRC), an

assessment center located in Ashtabula County, Ohio. Established in 2017, the FRC initially operated from 8:00am to 7:00pm, Monday through Friday. Through data collection and analysis, the decision was made in April of 2018 to close the Youth Detention Center and establish the FRC as a 24/7 facility and making it the entry point for all youth in Ashtabula County. The primary function of the FRC is to get involved with youth and families early and initiate services as soon as possible before contact with the courts becomes necessary.

Ms. Keater additionally highlighted the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) in Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana. Similarly, to the FRC, the MARC operates similarly and screens all youth who score for detention or interact with law enforcement. The MARC has also expanded to include prevention so families and youth can be serviced by the MARC without law enforcement involvement. Schools can also make referrals to the MARC. The MARC works to pool existing resources into one accessible location for families and to provide timely access to existing resources for family identified needs. Since 2011, the MARC has served 13,461 youth. Of that number, thirty two percent (32%) were met with immediate support within hours, eighty three percent (83%) have been diverted away from formal processing, and twenty-six percent (26%) of youth have been diverted from justice system involvement altogether.

Ms. Ambrose added that a Juvenile Justice Leadership Council is planning to reach out to school resource officers, other school personnel, and law enforcement to gain a better understanding of the needs of the kids within those schools so adequate plans can be made to serve them. Additionally, Ms. Ambrose stated that Philadelphia has been partner with the NAC for several years with the same goals in mind as Delaware County. Philadelphia's Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) has moved away from the initial framework outlined by the NAC but that does not dictate the trajectory of an assessment center within Delaware County.

Councilwoman Schaefer asked if assessment centers are 24/7 brick and mortar facilities that could provide shelter.

Ms. Keator responded that assessment centers look different across jurisdictions. Data being collected for Delaware County to determine how an assessment center would best serve the target areas. While some assessment centers around the country offer emergency respite, a feature of an assessment center is that it is determined by the community that it serves.

Ms. Ambrose added that an assessment center is not an alternative to secure detention, but rather a pathway for prevention and pathway away from juvenile detention. Ms. Ambrose additionally stated that co-locations with existing organizations is the most appealing option at this time and that no plan exists to build more facilities within the target areas.

Chairman Madden asked for further clarification regarding triage of an assessment center and who makes the determination of what services a youth may need and how that coincides with Juvenile Probation and the Courts.

Ms. Keator responded that those details occur as the planning process continues and that the NAC works with schools, law enforcement, and the courts to predetermine how certain offenses will be handled by the courts or if they will be diverted to the assessment center. Those agreements are solidified through policy.

Chairman Madden asked if it would be accurate to state that the assessment center is piloted in one fashion but is adaptable for the needs of the county.

Ms. Keator responded affirmatively and stated that assessment centers are designed to tailor to the needs of its jurisdiction however or whenever it may need to do so.

Ms. Ambrose added that memoranda of understanding exist among all stakeholders, and in some jurisdictions, Georgia for instance, an agreement has been made that assessment centers handle all juvenile misdemeanor cases. Possible calls that could be diverted to assessment centers include situations that occur in schools such as fights. Neither school resource officers nor the DA's office see the benefit of court involvement and frequently seek alternative pathways for these instances. Ms. Ambrose additionally stated that Aston has implemented a successful restorative justice and community service-based practice that could be implemented within identified target areas around Delaware County.

Chairman Madden asked for a more thorough proposal with complete detail about what Delaware County's needs are and how best practices could be implemented to address those needs, before a memorandum of understanding is distributed to stakeholders.

Ms. Ambrose responded affirmatively and stated that assessment centers within Delaware County may look different as the needs of those specific areas are more thoroughly examined.

Ms. Keator added that in addition to providing recommendations, the NAC would also provide County Council with a template of an operational plan and list of resources, as well as sample memorandums of understandings from jurisdictions with similar needs.

Board Member Townsend asked for further clarification on how the NAC identifies best practices within the community and how best practices are supported to ensure they remain effective for the community.

Ms. Keator responded that as these are holistic, community-based alternatives, the community's feedback is the biggest indicator on the success of these practices and that promising practices are qualitative.

Ms. Ambrose additionally stated that the restorative justice program in Aston was the direct result of a training with Pennsylvania Commission for Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) but other jurisdictions simply may not know that that training is even available. An assessment center would work to identify a best practice like Aston's restorative justice, make sure other jurisdictions know the training is available and supported by PCCD, and help to implement in other Delaware County jurisdictions. Ms. Ambrose additionally stated that it is a low-cost investment that taps into existing resources around the Commonwealth and ensuring their availability in Delaware County.

Board Member Turner asked if these resources provided further best practice outlines from around the country to ensure that Delaware County is adopting programs that are appropriate and necessary for the youths of Delaware County.

Ms. Ambrose responded that the baseline study did find that are models used around the nation that could be adopted by Delaware County and the NAC are willing to speak with assessment centers in similar jurisdictions and gain further understanding on best practices, implementations, and models.

Mr. Irizarry stated that the District Attorney does not want to prosecute low-level juvenile offenses, instead preferring the County provide resources to upstream intervention and preventative services. Mr. Irizarry stated that data shows eighty-five (85%) of youth detainees over the last several years had committed low-level offense and that the Juvenile Detention and Rehabilitation Services has a duty to provide secure beds as well as provide preventative resources to address root causes of low-level offenses.

Chairman Madden clarified that needs-based prevention services are cheaper and reimbursed at eighty percent (80%) compared to detention services which are reimbursed at fifty percent (50%).

Chairman Madden asked what funding looked like regarding the continuation of services with the NAC.

Mr. Irizarry responded that this planning process with the NAC can be included in the needs-based budget and that as of now, funding is available through the Juvenile Detention department's general fund and can be reimbursed through the Commonwealth under PA. Act 148.

Chairman Madden asked if additional outside grant funding may be available.

Mr. Irizarry stated that right now funds for the program would come out of the general fund, but there are upcoming opportunities for federal grant funding for reimbursement.

Chairman Madden asked if the cost of continuation of services had been determined.

Mr. Irizarry responded that that cost is sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000).

Councilwoman Schaefer, in reference to Board Member Townsend's previous question, asked how service providers would be identified if there is a lack of providers within the area.

Mr. Irizarry responded that while there are some programmatic pieces that are not yet in place, a formal request for proposal (RFP) could be distributed while community-based services continue to be identified. The baseline study began establishing how to fill the gaps in service needs and a continuation of services with the NAC will further bolster that effort until those programmatic components are added. Once the DA establishes what will be diverted away from the courts, the community must establish what accountability looks like.

Chairman Madden asked if the current work being done is identifying what the gaps are and assisting the county to post an RFP, or if those services could be provided by the County.

Mr. Irizarry responded that the service providers could also be existing community organizations that do not receive funding from the county and that the NAC would assist in establishing a partnership to provide youths a route to entry with those service providers. Additionally, further examination would be done to identify what needs to be done to help those providers support the needs of the community.

Chairman Madden asked for a motion from the Board to approve recommendation for the continuation of services from the National Assessment Center.

Dr. Taylor moved for approval of the recommendation; Reverend Turner seconded the motion.

Chairman Madden clarified that this motion is to vote for the Board's recommendation for a contract with the NAC to continue services.

Dr. Taylor expressed optimism in the assessment process and further expressed her support of the NAC's vision.

Reverend Turner also expressed his optimism in the NAC's work and looks forward to more information on what Delaware County could implement in the future.

The Board unanimously approved the motion.

**Old Business:** No old business.

**New Business:** No new business.

**Public Comment:** Kiersten Keenan, Brookhaven, Pa- Regarding the assembly of an assessment center, Ms. Keenan inquired as to whether funding for 24/7 staffing would be funded through the Juvenile Detention department, if salary and benefits are included in that budget, or if from the staff of existing agencies would be redeployed to the assessment centers. Ms. Keenan additionally inquired as to how this could affect tax dollars that Juvenile detention would need for other expenses and if any funding overlaps between other departments.

Chairman Madden responded that the answer to those questions can vary from jurisdictions, but a continuation of services with the NAC can provide better insight on how to answer those questions.

Mr. Irizarry responded that he was willing to meet with Ms. Keenan and Probation to give further insight on her questions.

Ms. Keenan responded that her questions come from the perspective of a taxpaying resident of Delaware County who wants to ensure that tax dollars are being used efficiently and that there is no potential overlap with existing programs in the county.

Chairman Madden responded that as a Council Member, he is fiscally conscientious and is hopeful that the programs could be reimbursed at eighty percent (80%) rather than fifty percent (50%).

**Board Member Comment:** No Board Member comment.

**Adjourn:** The meeting was adjourned at 5:57PM.

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