

MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: Friday, October 17, 2008 **TIME BEGAN:** 8:05am **TIME ENDED:** 10:00am

FACILITATED BY: Sarah Fox

SUMMARY BY: Judy Buswell

PRESENT: Sarah Fox, Laurie Belanger, Ruth O'Hara, Emily Clement, Nancy Porosky, Sandy McLaughlin, Micheline Roy, Betty Anson, Rasim Gusinac, Gil Schohan **GUEST:** Meghan Noyes, Director, Greater Laconia Child Advocacy Center; Deb Rosato, Director Prescott Farm Audubon Center **STAFF:** Alan Robichaud, Judy Buswell

1. **Welcome** - Sarah Fox, Council Chair Introductions and welcomes to guests were offered.
2. **Approve Meeting Minutes – 9/19/08** Motion made by Gil Schohan to accept the minutes of the September 19th Council meeting; second by Betty Anson. Motion carried.
3. **Greater Laconia Child Advocacy Center (GLCAC)**– Meghan Noyes Meghan has been the GLCAC Director for the past year. Prior to this position, she was a part-time member of the campus police at Plymouth State University. The power point presentation offered by Meghan highlighted the following:
 - The Child Advocacy Center approach allows for a one-time interdisciplinary interview with the child in a safe and neutral place, thus avoiding re-traumatizing the child with repeated interviews. All participating agencies have signed an MOU that allows for information sharing among the involved agencies. Meghan does most of the child interviews. The goal of the interviews is to assess the needs of each specific child.
 - The first Child Advocacy Center opened in Georgia in 1985. The first center in NH opened in 2001. The Laconia Center opened in 2005 in the Laconia Superior Court Building. The Center moved to the Lakes Region Family Center in 2006. GLCAC has interviewed more than 360 children since it opened.
 - Stats from the Laconia Center approximate national stats: 95% of children seen have been sexually abused; 4% physically abused; and 1% have witnessed violence in their homes. 75% of the interviewed children are female and the average age of the child is 9 years.
 - GLCAC territory includes part of Merrimack County.
 - GLCAC follows a national Child Abuse Prevention Program: Stewards of Children/Darkness To Light (www.darkness2light.org) This program shifts the role of prevention of child abuse from the child to adults. Darkness To Light offers seven steps as guides to protect children. They also offer free trainings to citizens and professionals.
 - The rate of child abuse is 10 times the rate of cancer in the US; yet the amount of money spent on cancer prevention/research is 10 times what is spent on child abuse prevention.
 - Psychological abuse is also a concern, but as GLCAC does not have licensed mental health providers they cannot do a lot of follow up care. However, members of the local mental health agency (Genesis) participate on the Review Team when needed.
 - Currently, referrals are coming in nicely. Meghan would like to see more referrals from the medical community.
 - Occasionally, a case cannot be prosecuted because the child will not reveal any information during the interview. If this occurs, the GLCAC has to halt investigation.

Meghan responded to several questions:

- *Is there information for expectant parents?* The national center may have information. Ruth O'Hara, Director of OB Services at LRGH, is interested in reaching new parents while they are still in the hospital. Their lying-in time is very short, under 48 hours, making parent education

very difficult in this hospital setting. According to Deb Rosato, the Lakes Region Mental Health Team has information on preventing child abuse and neglect.

- *Is there college-level education?* Sandy McLaughlin suggests this information could be part of basic child development classes taught at the collegiate level.
- *Are parents allowed into the center?* There is space for the “non-offending parent” to wait while the child is interviewed. For obvious reasons, the “offending parent” cannot be present at all.

4. **Director’s Report** – Alan Robichaud

- *Council Budget* Alan will meet with the Commissioners on October 22. He submitted a budget for 2009 that has a 3% decrease from 2008. The budgeting process will be very difficult this year; everything will be very closely scrutinized. Alan will need support and “a presence” from Council members as the process unfolds into early 2009.
- *Systems Integration Initiative* This new project is taking most of Alan’s time at this point. Council members are also involved. Betty Anson is chairing the Leadership Executive Committee, the committee tasked with moving the project through specific stages and working with consultant, John Tuell, from the Child Welfare League of America. Rich Moed is chairing the Administrative Oversight Committee, a group of senior executives from the state and county. The charge to this group is to remove barriers as they emerge to collaboration etc. The existing Data Committee has expanded to include Eric Borrin and Melissa Correia, Data Administrators for NH Juvenile Justice and NH DCYF respectively. Both are very supportive and are assisting the initiative in identifying specific data indicators that are currently available through the State Bridges Data System.
- *Community Juvenile Justice Survey* Data analyst, John Cook, who has assisted with several data-related projects for the Council in the past, is preparing a short summary report on the outcomes of the paper and electronic survey of over 225 Belknap County residents. Participants were asked if they thought taxpayers should support court diversion programs for juveniles, treatment programs for youth with substance abuse problems, and what taxpayer source should fund the juvenile system. Alan said an impressive majority of participants supported court diversion and most did not have a preference for whether these programs should be funded locally, by the county, or the state. The summary prepared by John Cook will be released soon.
- *The 2008 Community Justice / Juvenile Justice Report Card* was inserted in today’s (October 17th) issue of *The Citizen*. It will be mailed to every household in Belknap County on October 24th. The Council will also have a number of extra copies to distribute.

ACTION: Council members will help distribute these copies in public places in their communities.

- *Website Updates* Judy Buswell and David Stamps have been working on a major revision of the Council’s website. This update should be launched sometime during the week of October 20th. Alan commended the amount of in-kind work by David Stamps in this website revision.
- *Juvenile Justice At a Crossroad* Alan has written an issue brief on the status of the county’s juvenile justice programs. This report targets the County Commissioners and the County Delegation and local government groups. As a logical conclusion to his report, Alan offers a recommendation that may appear difficult and somewhat controversial. He would like the Council to formally endorse this report. One recommendation calls for the County to create a unified juvenile justice system that could save some taxpayer money and certainly more efficiently offer better outcomes for youth. This unified approach would include central intake, screenings, assessments, and referrals and would wrap in nicely with the Systems Integration Initiative.

For many reasons, including the reduced municipal contributions to the county’s two diversion programs, the levels of sanctions and the distinctions between the three programs are not clear. The goal is to build a seamless continuum of graduated sanctions with clear oversight and accountability strategies in place. Alan has had preliminary discussions with the directors of these

programs and is hopeful that together – in this current economic environment where no single program can feel secure - they can design an ideal system that will gain support throughout the county. The big challenge right now is to convince the County Delegation and County Commissioners that this plan is valid and needed now - in these tight financial times - more than ever before.

Council members who read the preliminary draft of Alan’s Crossroads Report suggested reducing the amount of “dense text” and providing a short abstract for readers. This abstract should stress (1) this plan should save the taxpayer some money (2) this plan will increase the quality of service for juveniles with improved outcomes (3) this plan will provide oversight through some construct of the Citizens Council.

ACTION: Council staff will reformat The Crossroads Report that will include an abstract. A detailed promotion plan will be given to all Council members.

- *Contacting Members of the County Delegation* Micheline Roy has talked with Judie Reeve who supports all the work of the Council. Gil Schohan has tried to reach Peter Bolster. Emily Clement has talked with Delegation candidates, Dick Stuart and Olie Anderson. Dick is supportive; Olie believes in “prevention” but he is “also big on reducing the budget”.

5. Workgroup Reports

- *Prevention WorkGroup – Micheline Roy* A small, but successful Focus Group was held with members of the Financial, Insurance, and Real Estate sector. While the goal was to discuss how this sector incorporates student aspirations (Follow The Child) into their interactions with families, other very useful information and partnerships emerged. Dan Kusch co-facilitated this Focus Group.
- *Executive Committee – Sarah Fox* It is time to think about names and the process for nominating Council officers for 2009. Alan outlined the previous process and asked Council members to make any suggestions for changes.

6. Other Updates

- *Ruth O’Hara* attended the Attorney General’s Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect. She attended a session with Dr. Vincent J. Felitti, MD of Kaiser Permanente. Dr. Felitti is associated with the Adverse Child Experiences study (ACE) that links adult health issues such as obesity, heart disease, and addictions with emotional and physical trauma experienced by young children. This work has profound implications for the science of prevention.
- *Nancy Porosky* attended the NH Substance Abuse Conference as a representative of FASTER (Families Advocating Substance abuse Treatment, Education and Recovery). FASTER had a display at the conference where Nancy made many nice connections.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING

WHEN: Friday, November 21, 2008, 8-10am

WHERE: Busiel Mill River Level Conference Room