

MEETING SUMMARY

COMMITTEE: JJAC

DATE: Friday, April 24, 2009

TIME BEGAN: 7:30am

TIME ENDED: 9:00am

FACILITATED BY: Andre Paquette

SUMMARY BY: Judy Buswell

PRESENT: Andre Paquette (Citizens Council Chair), Leo Sanfacon (Boys & Girls Club), Jeff Steigler (Laconia Police Dep't), Alicia Morey (Youth Services Bureau), Diane Lynch (Laconia Library) **STAFF:** Judy Buswell, Alan Robichaud

1. **Update Commissioners' Response to BARJ Report** *Alan Robichaud* The County Commissioners are currently reviewing this report, prepared and submitted by the Citizens Council. The report has recommendations for the future direction of court diversion in Belknap County and outlines key elements of a unified juvenile justice system in a manner that maintains and promotes graduated sanctions. The Commissioners are also following an MOU that would combine some of the services and infrastructure of Youth Services Bureau and the Belknap County Juvenile Restorative Justice Program. Because of vacation schedules of the Commissioners, it may be awhile before the Commissioners can comment on either of these items.
2. **Restorative Justice & Youth Services Bureau MOU Update** *Alicia Morey* The MOU submitted to the Commissioners describes a process being used by the Restorative Justice Program and Youth Services Bureau to merge and unify some of their services into one program, titled for the time being as "Belknap County Court Diversion and Prevention". This re-organized entity will have one telephone number that will receive all referrals for court diversion cases. The program staff will determine the best placement for the referred youth. Advisory boards of both programs support these changes. Information and education sessions for area police chiefs and program volunteers are now underway.

This centralized intake process will also include the use of GAIN-Q, a short screening to help identify youth with mental health, behavioral, or substance abuse issues who will then be referred on for appropriate services. Maria Gagnon of New Futures has met with program staff to discuss the process for using GAIN-Q. Currently they are exploring ways to computerize the results, allowing the data to be included in a national/state database. All staff will be trained in the use of GAIN-Q.

Alicia and Brian Loanes have been working with Lee Duncan to prepare a budget for unifying these two programs. This budget should be built around the number of cases managed by both programs before the economic downturn began in early 2008. Anticipated staff will include a Director who will also do some case work and two Coordinators for both the Court Diversion and UpSwing Programs, with an additional staff person to be added once the numbers return to normal levels. Other programs will be handled as contracted services. The two programs plan to operate as one agency by the end of 2009. Youth Services Bureau will not know about Laconia's level of support until the summer; however, currently YSB has sufficient funds to operate until the end of this year.

This new program will have an Advisory Board. At this point, it is not clear where the program will physically reside or how it will be supervised. Program leaders will discuss this further with the County Commissioners.

The Youth Assistance Program (Tilton/Sanbornton) is aware of these changes and has been invited to participate. As their financial situation will not be clear until towns make decisions on funding support levels, Y.A.P. has only expressed an interest in participating with the centralized intake component.

3. Program Updates

- **GAIN-Q Referral Protocols** – *Alan Robichaud* Representatives from Genesis, Child and Family Services of NH and the Family Resource Center will meet with Alan, Alicia and Brian on May 7th to prepare a process and procedures for handling referrals generated by the GAIN-Q in this new centralized intake process as described above.
- **HB 342** – *Alan Robichaud* This bill is reviewing juvenile diversion law in New Hampshire. Alan and others from Belknap County will testify at an upcoming hearing in Concord. Outcomes from this, and other exploratory efforts could lead to state funding for court diversion programs.
- **PSU Consultant Report** – *Alan Robichaud* Stephanie Halter, PhD and Scott Meyer, PhD from Plymouth State University are in their third year of a grant-funded contract with the Citizens Council to assist with data-related juvenile justice activities in Belknap County. The two consultants recently finished a report that compares and contrasts the costs of court diversion with just the costs of “processing” cases in the court system (court personnel, JPPO, and police time, transportation etc). Even in this time of diminished case loads for court diversion programs in Belknap County - yet with overhead costs remaining the same - this report shows that court diversion, at an average of \$3,500. per youth, is only one-third of the costs to process one juvenile through the court system. This is solid information that underscores that court diversion brings substantial savings for taxpayers.
- **School Bullying** – *Andre Paquette* Andre commented on a recent television news program where a youth developmental professional said that school bullying episodes, sometimes ending in teen suicide and other tragic consequences, can only be resolved through a restorative justice approach. These cyber-bullying teens need to understand how their victims feel and then make restitution to them and to their school communities, all restorative justice principles. Judy added that YouTube has some very interesting video clips filmed during conferences and seminars that address how restorative justice programs can operate successfully within schools. The link is: http://www.youtube.com/results?search_type=search_playlists&search_query=Restorative+Justice+in+schools&uni=1 (If this link doesn't work, the video clips Judy references are available at www.Youtube.com., Type “restorative justice in schools”, and follow “Conferencing” links.)
ACTION: Andre suggests adding this “Restorative Justice in Schools” to the Agenda of a future Council meeting.
- **Laconia Police Department** – *Jeff Steigler* Laconia Police Department has found that a significant number of juveniles prefer court involvement rather than participating in court diversion. Apparently these youth do not want “the hassle and expectations of community service.” In these cases, and others where parents do not make requested court appearances etc, it is very important to hold these parents accountable.

As there needs to be a concerted effort around coordinating pre-adjudicated services with the court system, these issues are compounded by the budgetary cut-backs and reductions in resources for Courts. Perhaps a CASA-type volunteer program in the courts might be useful? Jeff said that the prosecuting role for police departments is very time-consuming and, that while Laconia PD has a designated juvenile officer, smaller departments have real problems trying to integrate these services effectively. Police departments and taxpayers that support law enforcement services also have varying understandings of the vast

distinctions between managing juvenile and adult offenders. Laconia PD makes every effort to explain that juvenile justice is not punitive, but rehabilitative, with a focus on changing kids' behaviors.

- **Update on 211-NH – Andre Paquette** Andre has been working with NH 211 to enter all the data from the YSB, CoRe and other Resource Manuals. This effort is now complete. Agencies included in 211 listings are also able to update their own information. Explanations for updating are on their website <http://www.211nh.org/> 211 is also developing key word search functions for users, a capability that will greatly enhance the abilities of families to identify needed resources and for professionals to help match resources with their clients.
- **Laconia Library - Diane Lynch** Diane said the library is having another spike in behavior problems, primarily from young adults, ages 19-22. Their behaviors are disruptive to the other library patrons and serve as a poor role model for younger teens, the population these young adults prefer. These young adults are apparently un- or underemployed, often have substance abuse challenges and court involvement. The library has tried numerous strategies to resolve this situation but none seem to have any long-term effect. Library policies try to balance inclusivity for all along with the protection of regular users. Library staff make at least weekly calls to the LPD, for situations involving loitering, cyber-bullying, and even physical assault. Jeff Steigler said “we need to get to the bottom of this problem soon”. He suggests that Randy Brough (Library Director) contact Capt Clark or Lt Adams and ask them to have a presence at the Library on an ongoing basis (“Directed Patrol”), especially during specific problematic times of the day. Jeff said the Bike Team may be assigned.

ACTION:

- **Diane will ask Randy Brough to contact the Laconia Police Department for “Directed Patrol” at the Library at determined times.**
- **Andre will explore avenues for Citizens Council involvement.**

NEXT MEETING

WHEN: Friday, June 26, 2009 7:30-9:00 AM

**WHERE: Belknap County Cooperative Extension
Wing, County Complex, 36 County Drive,
Laconia**