



JJPOC Meeting Minutes

April 18th, 2019

2:00PM

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Attendance:

Ram Aberasturia	John Frassinelli	Melissa McCaw	Rep. Toni Walker
Abby Anderson	Eulalia Garcia	Derrick Molden	Sen. Gary Winfield
Francis Carino	Hector Glynn	Marc Pelka	Stephanie Zanker-Rivera
Hon. Judge Patrick Carroll	Rep. Robin Green	Natasha Pierre	TYJI Staff:
Hon. Judge Bernadette Conway	Susan Hamilton	Christine Rapillo	William Carbone
Rollin Cook	Brian Hill	Janeen Reid	Susan Cusano
Vannessa Dorantes	Rep. Gail Lavielle	Gary Roberge	Erika Nowakowski
Sarah Eagan	Sen. George Logan	Martha Stone	Alex Scranton
Tais Ericson			

Representative Toni Walker called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Rep. Toni Walker asked for a motion to accept the meeting minutes of March 21st, 2019. The motion to accept the meeting minutes was seconded and passed unanimously.

Update on Progress

William Carbone, Executive Director of the Tow Youth Justice Institute at the University of New Haven, informed the members of the JJPOC that House Bill - 7389 had been voted Joint-Favorable out of the Judiciary Committee. The Bill includes most of the recommendations that were adopted by the JJPOC. Mr. Carbone then reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

Presentation of National Standards and Best Practice on Use of Solitary Confinement in Facilities Housing Youth

William Carbone then introduced Jason Szanyi, Deputy Director of the Center for Children’s Law and Policy (CCLP), for his presentation on National Standards and Best Practice on Use of Solitary Confinement in Facilities Housing Youth. The presentation began with an overview of Stop Solitary for Kids, a national campaign to end the practice of solitary confinement of youth in juvenile and adult facilities.

Next, several definitions of solitary/room confinement, according to national organizations and state agencies, were discussed. The sources included the Council of Juvenile Correctional



Administrators, the National Partnership of Juvenile Services, the American Correctional Association, the federal First Step Act and the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services. An important note was made that it is more about the actual practice than the label given to the practice, as various states and facilities have different names for what is essentially the same thing.

Mr. Szanyi then discussed certain situations when solitary/room confinement is permissible. National standards only allow solitary/room confinement when the youth is an immediate threat to harm themselves, other youth, or staff in the facility. The standards call for the confinement to be brief (4 hours max) and monitored. The standards also state that solitary/room confinement should never be used as punishment, a form of administrative convenience, etc. In addition, it was mentioned that many prominent national mental health organizations, such as the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, all have strong position statements against the practice of solitary/room confinement for juveniles. These organizations all note the negative effects that such confinement has on the youth's mental health.

The presentation then discussed what has gone on in other states surrounding solitary/room confinement of juveniles. This includes litigation, legislation, and updated policies and practices. Recent laws passed in states such as California, Florida and Massachusetts all have directed efforts to explicitly describe when solitary/room confinement is permitted, under what guidelines, as well as call for any data collection necessary.

Finally, the presentation explored the idea of what happens when the solitary/room confinement reaches the maximum time permissible. Solutions include transferring the youth internally/externally so they can receive the appropriate services required or providing special individualized programming to the juvenile. States that have adopted recent changes in their juvenile room confinement policies have noticed positive effects. Colorado, Oregon and Ohio saw significant reductions in the amount of violence in their facilities while also experiencing a sharp reduction in the amount of isolation used.

After the presentation, the members of the JJPOC thanked Jason Szanyi and engaged in a discussion surrounding the topic. The discussion included Connecticut's current legislation regarding solitary confinement of juveniles.

Update by the Department of Correction on Progress Made Following Release of the Child Advocate's Report

Senator Gary Winfield introduced Rollin Cook, the Commissioner of the Department of Correction. Commissioner Cook gave the members of the JJPOC a brief overview of the current state of affairs at Manson Youth Institution (MYI). This included the announcement of a new warden, Derrick Molden, as well as highlighting several important changes made following the release of the OCA report. Commissioner Cook then introduced Eulalia Garcia, Deputy Warden at MYI, to give a more detailed presentation of the progress made.



Deputy Warden Garcia stated the MYI has addressed the following areas of concern following the OCA report: impact of solitary confinement, utilization of chemical agent, programming/services offered, mental health services, school attendance and facility cleanliness.

There has been a revision to their Confined to Quarters (CTQ) status which now allows all inmates to attend school, unless there is an immediate safety risk. The revision also no longer requires inmates to be restrained during their out of cell time. Over a 3-month period from January-March 2019, there was 0 observed instances of routine restraints placed on juveniles. There has also been a documented 28% decrease in the use of chemical agent in 2018 from 2017. The staff has been directed to make every attempt possible to diffuse situations using verbal techniques. Another important change also allows un-sentenced offenders to participate in the over 40 programs that MYI currently offers.

Other important changes include implementation of family engagement activities, requests for additional funding/staffing for programming and a review of visitation restrictions. MYI staff have recently toured CSSD's facilities in an effort to collaborate with detention staff. MYI has also implemented Restorative Justice circles in their cottages on a twice per week schedule. Improved data tracking has begun, and interview tools have been implemented to ensure that the needs of all youth are met in the facilities. Efforts have also been made to improve school attendance as well as address issues with substitute teachers. In an effort to promote cleanliness, the cells and living areas were repainted and cleaned and reminders were placed in each cell that promote hygiene.

After the presentation, the members of the JJPOC thanked the Department of Correction and engaged in a discussion surrounding the topic. The discussion included if the Restorative Justice circles included victims, educational programming, and lack of substitute teachers.

Update by the Incarceration Subgroup on "Definition of Use of Solitary Confinement in Facilities Housing Youth"

Sen. Winfield introduced Susan Hamilton, Director of Delinquency Defense and Child Protection at the Office of the Chief Public Defender, for an update on the Incarceration's subgroup exploring the definition of solitary confinement. The subgroup has met twice via web-based meetings and reviewed national best practices as well as what other states are doing. At this time, no consensus could be reached. The next steps include continuing to review best practices and utilizing CCLP's presentation to come closer to consensus at the next Incarceration Work Group meeting.

Consolidation of Juvenile Functions within the Judicial Branch/CSSD

Sen. Winfield introduced Gary Roberge, Executive Director of the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division, for an update concerning the consolidation of juvenile function within the branch.



Of the 174 children that were transferred from DCF to CSSD on 7/1/18, 53 remain on probation caseloads. Of those 53 juveniles, 18 have been placed into a REGIONS residential program. Also effective on that same date, disposition options lasted up to 18 months for probation supervision with/without residential placement. The disposition can be extended an additional 12 months (30-month total).

CSSD utilizes Secure and Staff-Secure facilities for the implementation of their REGIONS programming with their youth boys. Currently, the Secure facilities are at the detention centers in Hartford and Bridgeport, with up to 12 beds at each location. A recent RFP also anticipates an additional 8-bed facility to be operating on or after July 1, 2019. The girls are served at Journey House, which CSSD assumed operation of from DCF during the transfer. There are currently 2 contracts up and running for Staff-Secure facilities for boys. One facility is operated by the Connecticut Junior Republic and is up to 8 beds and the other is through the Boys and Girls Village, with a 12-bed capacity. CSSD also offers per diem beds to juveniles with specialized needs. The per diem beds are offered through a variety of DCF-licensed residential centers.

From 7/1/18 to date, 40 juveniles have been placed in REGIONS Secure units, 22 have been admitted to Staff-Secure facilities, 7 have been placed in per diem options, and 11 girls have been admitted to Journey House. Depending on future funding, CSSD also hopes to acquire additional Secure and Staff-Secure locations, as well as offer additional therapy and vocational services.

Next Meeting: May 16th, 2019 2:00pm

Meeting adjourned at 3:45pm.

*Audio and/or video of the meeting can be found on

https://www.cga.ct.gov/app/taskforce.asp?TF=20141215_Juvenile%20Justice%20Policy%20and%20Oversight%20Committee